



Grace Notes

Why Lent? Why Special Services?

Each year, the Christian church begins a forty-day journey leading up to Easter, known as the season of Lent. Lent is from the old form of "lengthen" which indicates days getting longer during this season.

Today, many Christian churches associate Lent with a purification period, like Noah and the 40 days of rain, Moses' 40 days on the mountain with God, the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the desert, and Christ's 40-day period of fasting and temptation. Lent is a period of somber self-examination and penitence in preparation for Easter.

Not all Christian churches observe Lent. Lent is mostly observed by the Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Anglican groups. In Western Christianity, Ash Wednesday marks the first day, or the start of the season of Lent, which begins 40 days prior to Easter (Technically 46, as Sundays are not included in the count).

The exact date changes every year because Easter and its surrounding holidays are movable feasts based on lunar cycles. This year, Lent begins quite early, on February 14th, with the observance of Ash Wednesday.

I believe we can distinguish three different categories into which each Lutheran liturgical practice during Lent can be placed: Visual, Historical/Traditional, and Emotional/Spiritual. Some practices may fall into multiple categories – and rightfully so.

VISUAL

THE COLOR PURPLE

One visual component is the color purple, which adorns the Lord's house in various ways throughout the season of Lent. The dye to make purple was very difficult to find in ancient times, so it was attributed to royalty. The Bible only speaks of Jesus wearing it once – as He was mocked and ridiculed as the "King of the Jews" prior to His gruesome crucifixion.

This deep hue has come to represent solemnity, penitence, and prayer as God's people meditate on the agony His Son willingly endured. Twice in the Lenten season, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the Lord's house may be adorned with the color black which represents the absence of light and the curse of sin and darkness which fell over creation that only the death of the perfect Son of God could abolish.

ASHES

Another visual component is that of the sign of the cross applied upon the repentant Christian's forehead during the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Typically using ash created by the burning of palms from the previous Palm Sunday, this symbolic rite is a reminder of the sign of the cross that was placed on us in our Baptisms, our mortality ("Remember: you are dust, and to dust you shall return."), and the filth of our sin that has been washed clean by the blood of Jesus.



LENT and HOLY WEEK - Schedule

(continued from page 1)

HISTORICAL/TRADITIONAL

MUSIC

A historical/traditional component of the Lenten season is the omission of the word "Alleluia" from the liturgy and songs as well as an omission of the Hymn of Praise in our services. "Alleluia"—a Hebrew word meaning "Praise the Lord"—returns full-voice in the glorious celebration of Easter morning.

FOOD

Many churches that observe Lent also celebrate Shrove Tuesday. Shrove is a word indicating forgiveness for confessed sin. Traditionally, pancakes are eaten on Shrove Tuesday (*the day before Ash Wednesday*) to use up rich foods like eggs and dairy in anticipation of the 40-day fasting season of Lent. Shrove Tuesday is also called Mardi Gras, which is French for Fat Tuesday. In my Polish background, it was also known as Paczki Day.

EMOTIONAL/ SPIRITUAL

During the six weeks of self-examination and reflection, Christians who observe Lent typically make a commitment to fast or to give up something – a habit, such as smoking, watching TV, or swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate, or coffee. Some Christians also take on a Lenten discipline, such as reading the Bible and spending more time in prayer to draw nearer to God. We provide a special Lenten devotional for this purpose.

The practice of fasting (or "giving something up") during Lent is not commanded in Holy Scripture. Rather, as a matter of Christian freedom, starving oneself of a human pleasure is a way to remember each day the great sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to pay for the world's sins.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

You may celebrate your Lenten journey in any variety of ways. However you follow the visual, traditional, or spiritual elements, may it be a blessing to you as you again experience the depth of Jesus' obedience and the great love of God to redeem a world so desperately in need of salvation. Join us here at Amazing Grace for all our special opportunities for worship and observation of the traditions of Lent, leading into Holy Week and the joy of Easter.

In love,

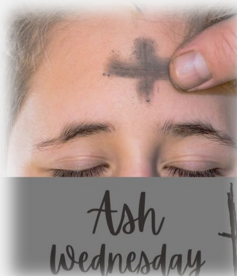
Pastor Mackowiak

LENTEN MID-WEEK SERVICES and MEALS on Wednesday Nights

Each week Worship begins at 5:30 pm with
Dinner following at 6:15 pm
Watch for sign-ups for these meals at the
Connect Center!

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 14



In addition to the evening service and meal, a **drive-up Imposition of Ashes** will be available under the canopy from **noon - 1 pm** for those unable to attend service.

LENTEN MEAL SCHEDULE

(main dish - volunteers will bring side dishes)

February 14 - Sloppy Joes
February 21 - Soup & Sandwich
February 28 - Hamburgers/Hot Dogs
March 6 - Subs
March 13 - Potluck
March 20 - Chicken

HOLY WEEK



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Palm Sunday March 24

Regular Worship Schedule

Maundy Thursday March 28

7 pm Service with Communion

Good Friday March 29

4 pm and 7 pm Services

Easter Sunday March 31


8 and 10:15 Worship, Easter Brunch, and
Butterfly Release!

BIBLE STUDIES– Which one is for you?

The Cross of Jesus Christ and the Word of God are central to who we are at Amazing Grace. What does the Bible mean to you? Is it just something those people read during Sunday worship? Is it a dry and dusty history book with no relevance to your life? Is it something you turn to now and then for a bit of quick inspiration? Or is it the living, breathing Word of almighty God that allows Him to speak directly to your life with love?

“Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.” - 2 Timothy 3:16 (“The Message”)

Why not use the next few months to find a Bible Study group at AGLC to explore? These small groups allow you to connect with other Christians from AGLC and the community, support each other, and share the road of life together while you grow spiritually. Listed below are our current studies. Keep an eye on the bulletin and Grace Notes for other studies that may be added.



The World of the Messiah


Sunday Bible Study
9:15-10:00 am
Room 101/102
Taught by Jere Green

This Sunday morning Bible Study dives deep into how the world looked when Jesus was on the earth. Culture, religions, politics, law, and so much more had an impact on how people lived and how they responded to the Son of God. Taught by Jere Greene, you will always walk away knowing something new! Open to all who attend AGLC.



Bible Study Fellowship

This women’s study is hosted at Amazing Grace Tuesdays from 11:30-1 pm and includes women from many churches. Contact Marliese White, (971-506-9883).



THE BOOK OF Joshua

MEN’S BIBLE STUDY
Bradenton Rec Center
Wednesdays, 8:45-10:00 am

The Wednesday Men’s Bible Study meets almost every week of the year, and also includes Zoom for those unable to attend in person. The group averages 25 to 35 men from various churches who want to share their beliefs, further enhance their knowledge of scripture, and share fellowship with other Christians.

This study is a great time to grab your morning coffee and grow spiritually. The current study of the Book of Matthew, led by Eric Fehlau, will finish in mid-February, then they will switch to a book called “Jesus Said What?”, which will help you understand some of the more challenging things Jesus told us. All are welcome!

MEN’S BIBLE STUDY

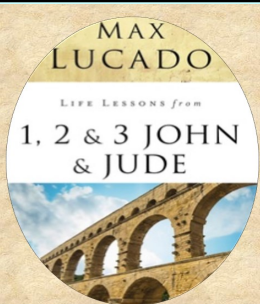
Thursdays at Amazing Grace
7:30 – 8:30 am

All are welcome!



The group includes men who are beginning their journey with scripture to those who have attended seminary. The group is ever changing, led by Bill Donaldson (631 241 6846) , and has met for almost 9 years.

The current study of the book of Joshua will continue for the next couple of months. They sometimes enjoy a Bagel breakfast or luncheon. Attend our study as a regular member or just as a guest. You can also just show up on Wednesday!



Womn of Grace Bible Study

Mondays, 10:30am-Noon at Amazing Grace

New Study Beginning Jan. 29

Women of Grace is a wonderful group of AGLC women and friends that focuses on prayer and fellowship as well as study. Led by Betty Eich (847-400-4527), they dive into God’s Word each week and learn not only what it says, but how it applies to daily life. Join them as they begin this new study, and bring a friend!




NEW Bible Study!
Fridays, beginning February 2
10-11:30 am

At the Gottleber’s home

This brand new home Bible Study will look at how the issues of our times are not really new. Amos had to deal with them also. The study will run for 10-weeks starting Feb. 2. Please contact Ned Gottleber, (517-256-5418) , so he can plan enough seating and materials. Thanks!

HERE'S WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT AMAZI



One new **Women's Mini** tradition started in September

"Second Monday Lunch Bu
 15-25 women sign up and ju
 at 1 pm for food & friends!
 Check the sign-up sheet at
 Connect Center for the next lo
 and join us!



119 students and 23 staff members of our Early Learning Center were welcomed to the new school year!



68 AGLC members and friends gathered for our Annual Golf Outing where great competition and food was enjoyed by all!

\$2,270 was raised toward a playhouse that will be built for the ELC.



Thanks to Bob and Bunny Gowell for stepping up to lead this event.
Reserve October 19 for the 2024 Golf Outing and join us!



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ING GRACE SINCE SEPTEMBER! - by the numbers

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Many of our ELC teachers and volunteers attended the FL-GA District President’s Equip Conference to learn and grow their skills!

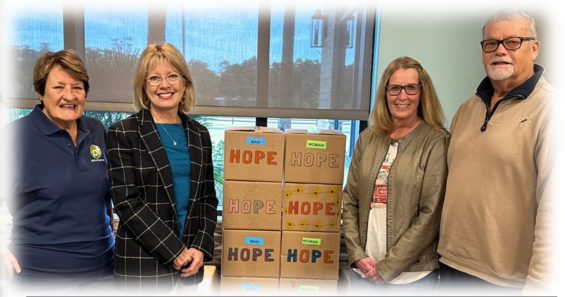


TRUNK OR TREAT

October 27



This year was our first ever Trunk or Treat and it was a huge success! Many thanks to Darlene Fitchett, Roni Cotroneo, Tish Madden, and Bill Hutchison for organizing, and to the many church members and ELC relatives who came together to create such a wonderful time for our church and ELC children. This year was a “limited test run” to see how things would work. Next year we hope to make it a public event for the community. Will you consider joining us?



as already been busy with the Wildwood Elementary School Accelerated
rs Pizza Party and Awards, and Trivia night! More on those items next issue!
coming events and consider friends you can invite to learn that our church
coming place where we happily serve God, our community and each other.

Over 30 volunteers met to pack Care Packages of Hope for cancer patients through Phil’s Friends (philsfriends.org). For the first time, we will also be delivering these to Florida Cancer Specialists! **Mark your calendar for another Packing Party on May 4th!**

BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE!



Our Fellowship Team increased by one, when Pat Wallinger joined Deb & Devra! They hosted our annual Octoberfest, Advent dinners, Trivia Night, and more.



Twenty beautifully set tables set the stage for our annual Advent by Candlelight outreach event led by Women's Ministry. We enjoyed a delicious meal, met new friends, heard the story of Jesus' birth in a new way through the "Circle of Light" program, and enjoyed the Bells of St Timothy handbell choir! We also collected over \$2500 in gift cards for needy families at Wildwood Elementary School.
Reserve Saturday, April 13, 9-3, for our Spring Retreat!



Five beautiful, hand-crafted, rolling cabinets were presented to the church by Ed and Sue Williams. These cabinets took many hours of labor and make up our new **CONNECT CENTER**.

Logistics, Logistics, Logistics!

Can you guide guests to a parking place? Can you work with others to move tables and chairs, or carry things up and downstairs to and from our storage room?

All of these things are needed to adjust our multi-use facility for various functions and to support large audience calendar items such as concerts, Advent by Candlelight, and ELC family events.

Many hands make light work and we need YOU to keep our busy church life moving forward seamlessly! If you can help, please contact Jeff Robinson, 309-922-7346 (the 10:15 service drummer), and let him know what days/times you could typically help.

ARE YOU AGED 60 OR OVER?

No? This article is still for you.

Researchers examined the lifestyles and death rates of nearly 9,000 Americans aged 60 and over to determine the relationship, if any, between volunteering and health. Among study participants, 35% reported volunteering during the previous year. In terms of health and physical activity, those who reported better health and more physical activity also tended to volunteer more. Volunteers also appeared to have a lower mortality risk than non-volunteers.

Everything we do here at Amazing Grace is essentially volunteer ministry. Every member of Amazing Grace is an important part of the body! We need each other to continue growing as a healthy body. It is truly a JOY to use our gifts to serve the Lord in His church. You can and will experience tremendous blessings as you minister to others. It's even FUN to be involved, and it's a great way to meet people and foster friendships.

God encourages us to use the gifts He gives us to do His work. You can be sure that He has called you to use your gifts for Him! There are a variety of ways to get involved here at Amazing Grace, with the added benefit of lowering your mortality risk.

Special thanks to all who volunteered in 2023. Those who helped bring God's Word to the lives of many through our worship, outreach events, social activities, special ELC events, and in so many other ways are truly a blessing! There are far too many to list, but each and every one is greatly appreciated! **We look forward to a growing numbers of volunteers as we move forward in 2024. The Lord's best is yet to come!**

NEWS FROM THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

We are now halfway through our academic school year, and I am pleased to share some of the significant happenings at our center.

We celebrated the Christmas season with a phenomenal Christmas program, during which the children sang a small part of the "Hallelujah Chorus"!

Many families were touched as we shared the story of the birth of our Savior and the light of His love. Additionally, we had a special visit from Santa, and each student received a toy from Toys 4 Tots, as well as PJs and a book from an organization within The Villages. Our children and families continue to be blessed in so many ways.

Next week, we will be celebrating **National Lutheran Schools Week** with all Lutheran schools nationally and internationally. The theme for our school year is "Connected". Each day of the upcoming week will provide opportunities for our classes to connect with each other, with other classes, and with our Lord.

We invite you to join us on Friday, January 29th, at 9 am for our "Connected" parade. Please gather around the grassy area to cheer on the children!

Our staff members are dedicated to growing their knowledge, participating in continuing education courses, and attending "Conscious Discipline" conferences. They have genuine hearts for Jesus and are committed to doing everything they can to help the children they teach be set up for success.



Our center has embarked on the **National Lutheran School Accreditation** process. Our accreditation team has been meeting monthly, working diligently to ensure we earn this accreditation in 2025. Please keep this process in your prayers, as it is rigorous.

Looking ahead, we are excited about continuing chapel each week, engaging in fun activities, having Jesus Times in our classrooms, and hosting more monthly events as we continue to partner with our families in their child's educational journey. If you've never seen one of our chapel services, visit us in the church Worship Center on Wednesdays, 10:30-11 am.

Thank you for your continued support!

God's blessings,
Aimee Knoepfel, Director



OUR MISSION

Experience Christ's Love. Live It. Share It.



Amazing Grace Lutheran Church
4886 CR 472 / Oxford, FL 34484
www.amazinggracelc.org
352-748-1201

Traditional Worship	8:00
Fellowship	9:00
Bible Study	9:15
Contemporary Worship	10:15



CHURCH STAFF

Church Office Hours
Tues - Fri: 8:30-3:30pm

Interim Pastor: Rev. Jack Mackowiak
Office Mgr. Susan Gordon
Music: Elizabeth Rockey, Praise Team
Ruth Bremer, Organist
A/V: Paul and Dawn Langley

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Aimee Knoepfel, Director
352-350-6449
Kerri Shpur, Assistant Director

MINISTRY LEADERS

ALTAR GUILD

Ruth Collver 727-519-5356

FELLOWSHIP

Devra Siebert 920-664-1317

Deb Kiley 920-619-0338

FINANCE COMMITTEE

John White 971-506-9881

MEMBERSHIP

Susan Gordon 352-748-1201

NEIGHBOR CARE

Bill Hutchison 734-756-0912

OUTREACH

Lois Schaefer 352-250-6541

PROPERTY

Mark Winka 314-717-4133

STEWARDSHIP

Deb Beck 517-617-0432

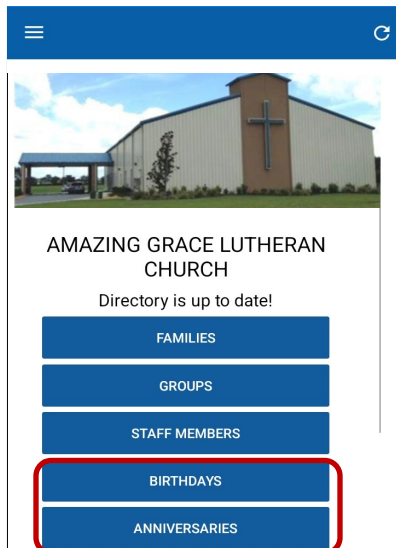
WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Bunny Gowell 207-286-6786

DID YOU KNOW...

...that Birthdays and Anniversaries are included in our phone app and link directly to their address and phone number so you can easily send a card, call, or text?

Need help with the app? Call the office and we'll be glad to assist!



LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John White, President	971-506-9881
Bob Kiehl, VP	314-378-6760
Tom Poppe, Treas.	425-418-8436
Dave Schernikau, Sec.	407-230-9654
Deb Beck	517-617-0432
Joyce Meyer	217-898-2484
Stephen Long	352-633-9530

DEACONS

Wanda Pierce	260-585-1054
Chuck Remus	708-805-4217
Butch Verbeck	314-210-6955
Stu Vogt	352-446-9910
Gary Wanzong	253-677-2881
John White	971-506-9881
Marliese White	971-506-9883

CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE

The call committee has been meeting since June of 2023. It is comprised of Maureen Labagh, Laurie Taylor, Dale Meyer, Sandy Sanders, Dennis Wallinger, John LeFavour and Bill Donaldson, Chair. Aimee Knoepfel also joins them on occasion, along with Interim Pastor Mackowiak who provides his guidance and expertise to the committee. Susan Gordon also provides considerable administrative support. A big thanks to all of these individuals!

Amazing Grace voted on November 19 to extend a Divine Call to Pastor Chris Kollmann of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Vero Beach, FL. Pastor Kollmann, after much deliberation and reflection, along with visits to the area and meet and greets at AGLC, declined our Call to him on Saturday, January 6.

He had nothing but complementary remarks about Amazing Grace and truly enjoyed all of the people he met and the meetings he attended. Unfortunately, for AGLC, Pastor Kollmann believed his God-directed Call was still at his current church. He offered his prayers as we continue our search for a Pastor, just as we offer prayers for his ministry at Redeemer.

On Thursday, January 11, we spoke with Pastor Thomas, the other candidate on our short list. Pastor Thomas shared that his church, St. John Lutheran, Mansfield, Texas, was beginning the process of planting a new church and he believed the Lord was directing him to see to the completion of this church plant. He therefore, believed it was not the time that he should be considering a call to another church.

We have started the process again of gathering names and contacting the District to also provide names of potential Pastors for AGLC.

We call our process a Divine Call and trust in our Lord to provide the right person to shepherd our congregation. We will continue the process and be patient as we wait on the Lord. We thank all of AGLC for their support, encouragement and understanding as we journey through these exciting and emotional times. May the Lord bless Amazing Grace as he prepares the heart and mind of the Shepherd He has in mind to lead us into our future mission here in the heart of Florida.