



The Quill

THE NEWSLETTER OF ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Williamsburg, Virginia

April 2025



GRACE

“From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:16-17)

“With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:33)

“...since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:23-24)

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” (Romans 11:6)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...” (Ephesians 2:8)

The word “grace” appears in the New Testament 116 times (according to the NIV translation). Granted, many of those instances are Paul using the word as he greets churches in his Epistles. But the word appears often enough that it bears studying. As a Lutheran minister the word “grace” impacts my theology in some powerful ways (*sola gratia* “by grace alone” is one of the pillars of Lutheran theology); so it is not entirely without self-enjoyment that I take up the subject of “grace.”

“Grace” is really a tricky term. Dictionary.com lists thirteen meanings for “grace” as a noun and two meanings for “grace” as a verb; it also describes five idioms that focus on the idea of “grace.” With such an overabundance of meanings it is no wonder that we often don’t really understand what “grace” means.

Let us begin with the beginning then; since I am aimed at a theological perspective on grace we need to look at

grace in the biblical context. Consequently, we will begin with the concept of grace in *Koine* Greek (the language in which the New Testament was written). Wherever you find the word “grace” in the New Testament it is a translation of the Biblical Greek word “*χάρις*” *charis*. Unfortunately, like in English, *charis* in Biblical Greek also has a number of different meanings.

Charis as beauty. Luke 4:22 reads “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the **gracious** words that came from his mouth. They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’” *Charis* here denotes loveliness or beauty. Christ in this text is speaking in a lovely or beautiful way.

Charis as attribute. This denotes either graciousness or, as a recipient, favor. In Luke 2:52 *charis* is used to describe what a young Jesus receives, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human **favor**.” In this instance *charis* is translated as “favor.”

Charis as act. 1 Corinthians 16:3 reads, “And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your **gift** to Jerusalem...” This describes an act of graciousness, in this instance the gift the church of Corinth has gathered to send to the apostles and church in Jerusalem.

As you can see, *charis* has varied meanings that are sometimes concrete, and sometimes blend into one another. At times it can be difficult to settle on one particular meaning over another which is part of the reason our understanding of grace, especially as a biblical concept, is often confused or confusing. Careful study in the months ahead will lead us to a clearer picture of grace as a biblical concept.

In Christ, **Pastor Jon**

CONGREGATION COUNCIL



Our March meeting was held on March 11, 2025.

In attendance: Pastor Jon Nelson, J.R. Lyons, Lou Rossiter, Nancy Egloff, Terri Larsen, Sandy Croushore, Paul Reier, Brandon Cave, Roberta Sulouff, Alison Carney

- Cox Powell began HVAC replacement work February 24.
- New flat roof topic tabled until after HVAC project is complete.
- Automatic front door plan was approved by the City.
- Deposit paid to Preschool Playground contractor; work expected to begin in June.
- Congregation-wide ministry plan discussion and potluck are scheduled for March 30, following a combined 9:45 a.m. worship service.
- Council to review building security with security contractor Kamco (cameras, locks, etc.).
- Council reiterated St. Stephen's commitment to help an Afghan refugee family that just arrived in the U.S.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2025.

Alison Carney, Secretary, Congregation Council

Thank You!



Thank you for your in-kind donation of nine pounds of food to the Williamsburg House of Mercy. On average we receive 18,000 pounds of in-kind donations per month and rely on these to supplement our costs in providing to the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you for your contribution.

Lent



Wednesdays in Lent

Wednesday evenings in Lent: April 2 and 9 at St. Stephen:

- 5:30 p.m.:** Soup supper in the Fellowship Hall
- 6:30 p.m.:** Lenten Midweek Service

HOLY WEEK



Thursday, April 17, 6:30 p.m. – Maundy Thursday worship **at St. Stephen**. Holy Communion with Stripping of the Altar. Pastor Gerry Johnson will preach.

Friday, April 18, 6:30 p.m. – Good Friday worship **at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 7479 Richmond Road, Norge, VA**. The service will include a reading of the Passion of Jesus. Pastor Jon Nelson will preach.

Saturday, April 19, 8:00 pm – The Easter Vigil **at St. Stephen**. The First Eucharist of Easter.

Easter Sunday, April 20, 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. – Festival Worship.



MEN'S & WOMEN'S BREAKFASTS

- **April 1** – Women are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Tuesday** of this month.
- **April 3** – Men are invited to join together for breakfast the first **Thursday** of this month.

Both gatherings take place at **8:00 a.m.** at the Colonial Pancake House, at the corner of Page Street and Penniman Road, Williamsburg, VA. The get-togethers promote conversation and friendship in a casual setting.



STEWARDSHIP ESSENTIALS

We know that helping the vulnerable and marginalized was a key concept of the ministry of Jesus. In Acts 20:35, Luke says, "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Proverbs 31:8 "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of the unfortunate."

Did you know that the Avalon Center, our local women's shelter, began in 1978 at St. Stephen when a group gathered to form the Williamsburg Task Force on Battered Women? In 1980 it was incorporated as a nonprofit agency. It became Avalon: A Center for Women and Children in 1990 and in 2016, Avalon Center. Since then, it has grown into an organization serving James City, New Kent, Charles City, King William, King and Queen, and York Counties; and Williamsburg, Matthews, Gloucester, and Poquoson.

Their mission statement is: *Avalon Center works to end domestic and sexual violence by breaking the cycle of abuse through prevention, education, shelter and support services in the Williamsburg and Middle Peninsula communities.* In recent years, an average of 1500 clients have been served per year.

Our April Stewardship emphasis is on helping abused women. The Avalon Center has a limited number of volunteer opportunities, but donations are always welcome. The nonprofit is supported by grant funds, donations and fund-raising activities. In addition to providing shelter for women and children, the agency also conducts educational outreach activities in middle and high schools, legal advocacy, and counseling. We will have a representative of Avon on **Sunday, April 6.**

The website, www.avaloncenter.org, offers contact information as well as educational information on how to help someone who may be the victim of abuse.

Susan Williamson



COMMUNITY OF FAITH MISSION WINTER SHELTER THANK YOU!

In this 13th Season of the Community of Faith Mission (COFM) Winter Shelter for the Williamsburg Area homeless, over 135 different persons passed through the shelter doors!

St. Stephen Lutheran Church was blessed to be able to serve by Partnering with Host Shelter Williamsburg United Methodist Church during their host week in February. It was a pleasure to work with them.

Ours was an especially cold and snowy week, and our Volunteers stepped up in many ways. I want to thank you all. There are some in the background, and many I don't know personally.

Thank You St. Stephen COFM Key Leader Jeanne Garrison for gathering the volunteers for and coordinating the preparation and serving of meals; Thank You to my COFM Key Leader wife, Virginia, who helped me stay focused (and awake); Thank You Pastor Jon Nelson and Parish Administrator Hollie Jones for making sure that the shelter's needs were known throughout the parish and helping me whenever needed; Thank You Sandy Peterkin, a long-time COFM Winter Shelter veteran, for her insight as we began our shelter responsibilities; and

THANK YOU for all of the St. Stephen Lutheran Church Parish Volunteers. Thank You for spending time training and working awkward shifts. Thank You for cooking, prepping, delivering, and serving food. Especially, Thank You for taking time to talk with our Guests in this transitional time of their lives. I am so grateful for each of you and your Call to Serve.

Love and peace,
Jim Ivey, St. Stephen Social Ministries COFM Liaison

STEPHEN MINISTRY AT ST. STEPHEN



UNCERTAINTY

We all have opinions about what is going on in Washington this year and I am not going to get into the good and bad points of the Trump administration. However, almost everyone I have talked to seems to notice that both Donald Trump and his pal, Elon Musk, are particularly skilled at causing a high level of uncertainty. A large number of government employees have been unsure whether they will still have their jobs from one day to the next. Researchers on government grants have wondered if and when their research funds will dry up. People dependent on food stamps have wondered if that support will go away. Seniors on Social Security go month to month wondering when their monthly checks will stop. Immigrants to our country are wondering when they will be deported even if they have followed the rules and never committed a crime. The tariffs come and go and business people and investors are uncertain how to respond. Yes, uncertainty is out there! There is plenty to go around and it is generating a lot of stress.

Last year, the American Psychological Association published some helpful bullet points of things we can all do to try to lower our stress levels in times of uncertainty. Their points included...

- **Be kind to yourself.** Don't beat up on yourself for being stressed out by uncertainty.
- **Focus on past successes.** Look at how you have successfully handled stress in the past and emulate your successes.
- **Develop new skills.** Learning new skills gives you satisfaction and may give you new ways to deal with a changing world.
- **Limit exposure to news.** News heightens stress levels and avoidance may help.
- **Avoid dwelling on things you can't control.** Dealing with things you can have an impact on will lessen the stress.
- **Take your own advice.** Imagining your situation from the outside can often provide perspective and fresh ideas.
- **Engage in self-care.** Make efforts to eat well, exercise, and get enough sleep.

- **Seek support from those you trust.** Family and friends are there for you.
- **Control what you can.** There are things in your control and managing those will help reduce your stress.
- **Ask for help.** If you do feel that the uncertainty and stress are overwhelming and disruptive of your life, outside help is available.

Members of the Stephen Ministry Service at St. Stephen are available to help those dealing with uncertainty, stress, depression, grief, anxiety, loss of faith or other issues that are prevalent and sometimes disabling. This is a free, confidential, lay listening and counseling service to help those going through difficult situations. If you feel you would like to have a Stephen Minister assigned to help you, please notify Pastor Jon Nelson or Stephen Leader Bill Dichtel.

As we read in Psalms 46, verse 1, "God is our refuge and our strength, A very present help in trouble." God is **always** there for us.

Bill Dichtel, Stephen Leader
(757) 232-5334, bill.dichtel@gmail.com



Jack Harris

Jim and Janice Mayfield
Jane deSolms (HVAC Fund)

Birdie Burton

Jane deSolms (Preschool Capital Fund)
David Joyner



APRIL

3	Evon Crittenden	Marian Thies
5	Chris Einarsen	Paul Reier
6	Amber Jansson	
7	Christine Jacobs	
8	Pete Davis	
9	Gerri Bass	
10	Trudi Arnold	Ingrid Brown
11	Art Nelsen	
12	Jenni Punchard	
13	Christopher Turner	
14	George Bass	
	Ellen LaPlace	Meghan Osborn
15	Steve Grant	
16	Christine Hallman	
17	Julie Meeks	Ken Spencer
18	Jo Hanny	Sandy Johnson
21	Bob Groom is 101!	
22	Sharon Jacobs	
23	Ellie Bailey	

BALLENTINE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Congratulations to our *Ballentine Scholars* who are completing their studies this Spring

Kristin Berkey-Abbott, who was our first Ballentine Scholar, will be awarded a Divinity Degree from Wesley Seminary in Washington, D.C. in May 2025. The graduation is being held at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.

Our most recent Ballentine Scholar, **Emily Ballentine Erb**, will receive two Masters degrees, in Organ Performance & Sacred Music, from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in the Spring.

More information about the Ballentine Scholar program can be found in the 2024 Annual Report or by contacting the church office or **Peter Raquet, Emily Rossiter, or Sandy Johnson**.

St. Stephen members are encouraged to let their families know about this program.

SCHOLARSHIP THANKS

Dear St. Stephen Lutheran Church,

As I begin my last semester of my MDiv program, I wanted to write to thank you again for all the ways you have supported me in my journey: the scholarship money, the prayers, and the opportunities. I appreciate the support more than words can convey.

Sincerely,

Kristin Berkey-Abbott





ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

This year is flying by and we are having a great time with our sweet littles and their families! We cannot wait to welcome warmer spring weather and put these cold snow days behind us.

In the last month, we've celebrated Read Across America week with a fun spirit week, hosted another successful Books & Breakfast, celebrated lots of Birthdays, and participated in some exciting St. Patrick's Day shenanigans.

Huge thank you to the Preschool Committee and congregation volunteers who made our Shrove Tuesday Pancake Breakfast Dinner a successful fundraiser and incredibly fun community event.



If you are interested in donating to the preschool fund or want to sponsor a summer camp week for one of our students please reach out to Jessica Kimball (preschool@saintstephenlutheran.net) or visit the updated preschool website to make an online donation. All of your support and generosity is greatly appreciated.

Jessica Kimball, Preschool Director





RECONCILING IN CHRIST



The Reconciling in Christ committee at St. Stephen has been more active in the last month. On March 23, we led a discussion between services and at the Lutheran Student Association dinner. Some of you have also had “one-on-one” interviews with core committee members as the process moves forward. The committee also gave a brief report at the January Congregational Meeting. We want to keep the process as transparent as possible and ensure that all know where to go if they have questions or suggestions as we proceed.

To ensure everyone is up to speed, let me explain what “Reconciling in Christ” (RIC) is and give a brief history. RIC is a program started within the Lutheran Church to recognize and identify those congregations that are more welcoming to individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual) as well as all racial and socioeconomic groups. It is not new: The program has a 40-year history and has grown to encompass not only Lutheran Congregations but also Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, the Reformed Church in America, and others. Church congregations individually undergo a process to consider if they wish to become an RIC-designated congregation as meeting the requirements of a truly welcoming one.

What is the process for becoming an RIC congregation? It is a two- to three-year soul-searching and self-analysis within the congregation where we closely assess attitudes, feelings, and deep-held beliefs on these issues. The process starts with building a core group, which can grow further as the process goes on. This group started last fall taking training on the topic and processes to proceed. Beginning in December, the core group started the one-on-one interviews that we hope to have with any or all in the congregation willing to meet and have heart-to-heart, honest discussions on this topic.

The core committee thinks and has heard from early one-on-one interviews that many feel that our church is very welcoming, and it is. Some have even suggested that RIC designation may be unnecessary or superfluous. Some have suggested that “All Christians are

welcoming!” But unfortunately, that is not the case, especially for the LGBTQIA+ community, minorities, immigrants, or others singled out for one reason or another. For the LGBTQIA+ community, the RIC designation is much like a positive Green Book designation for a Black traveler for a hotel or motel in the old segregated south. It is a clear marker that they will be safe and welcome here.

After the committee completes engaging the congregation through discussion and education, the core committee will conduct a congregational survey. If it concludes that the congregation is dedicated to this effort, the committee will bring it before the entire congregation for a vote with permission from the Church Council.

If you have further questions or wish to speak with a member of the core team one-on-one, please do not hesitate to contact any of us. Thank you, and may God bless our discernment on this important process.

Saint Stephen RIC Core Group:

Christina Nelson	Jeane Moore	Carol Brown
Michael Powell	Sandy Peterkin	Sandy Croushore
Bill Dichtel	Pastor Jon Nelson	

HVAC SYSTEM UPDATE



Cox Powell (our contractor) is working on getting the Architectural drawings for the HVAC system drawn and approved, so that they can be submitted for all necessary permits. The contractor has been here every day from 7:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. They are currently installing the new piping, which will continue through the month of April. They are using the Parish Nurse office as a staging area for the piping. In April they will assess and possibly remove the old system. This will leave us without heat from that point on, but we do not have an exact date yet. The work in the preschool area will start the week of April 7 while the Preschool is on Spring Break to try to cause as little disruption as possible to their schedule. We are on track for the installation of the new system to begin sometime in May.



APRIL BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARIES

The significance of baptism, Luther teaches in the *Small Catechism*, is “that the old creature in us with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

Your baptismal anniversary is an opportunity to light a baptismal candle and to give some prayer time to reflecting on your experiences during the past year on your journey in faith!

Pastor Jon Nelson

- | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----------------|
| 2 | Daniel Owens | |
| 4 | Cyndy Touhsaent | |
| 5 | Karen Chenault | |
| 7 | Tobias Janke | |
| 10 | Paul Black | Brad Jefferson |
| | Brandon Jefferson | Brock Jefferson |
| | Justice Jefferson | |
| 12 | Gretchen Osborn | |
| 13 | Karen Nester | |
| 14 | Bob Achenbach | Brian Bergh |
| 16 | Quill Agor | |
| 17 | Ingrid Squires | |
| 20 | Nancy Egloff | Elliot Lawson |
| 22 | Chris Einarsen | |
| 23 | Phyllis Spencer | |
| 25 | Jim Mayfield | |
| 27 | Karen Einarsen | |

Others who were baptized in April:
Bob Hanny

Were you baptized in April but your name isn't on the list above? Let us know!

PRAYERS



Join your prayers for healing with God's desires for Susan Britcher, Ellen Bushman, Kristin Carter, Bob and Ginny Cummings, Sharon Jacobs, Donna Kittelson, Jim Mayfield, Carole Meyer, Helen Nelsen, and George Vonderheide.

Pray for those unable to come to worship: Ailene Bartlett, Ed Brown, Ruth and Forrest Fenstermaker, Bob and Angie Groom, Pat Janot, Marilyn Johnson, Jeanne Nelson, Darlene Simon, and Kay Wasaff.

We hold the family and friends of Linda Vonderheide, especially George in prayer as they grieve her death.

Pray for these loved ones of our congregation: Susan, Charles Baugh, Donald and Carol Baum, Gary Baumgarten, Robi Bayard, June Brantley, Sue Havola Berhs, Mary Bloom, Tim Brown, Raymond Bunn, Karin Cavanaugh, Chris Clarke, Amaree Cluff, Ruth Ann Coski, Judy Craun, Judy Drezek, Becky Drury, Darrin and Rosemary Dunn, Tanya Fritz, Hollis Fulton, David Gade, Joel Gillespie, Greg Gildner, Joan and John Goodhart, Jonathan Hallman, Charee Hampton, Sue Hassan and family, Andy Havola, Nick Havola, Bradley, Kim, Joan and Laurie Heintzleman, Lisa Hill, Nancy Hodge, Jaxon Ireland, Lynn Isenburg, Claudia Jacobik, Brian Johnson, Don Johnson, Connie Kendrick, The Kennedy family, Jenn Kramer, Elaine Lane, Marnah Lund, Keara Mahony, Jim Monteith, Trish Macerelli, Laura Margolin, Jack Mayfield, Doug MacKenzie, Jimmy Mitchell, Liz Montalvo, Mia Monteith, Ed Moninger, Kim Morris, Bob Myers, Jeanette Osborn, Coral Pumley, Kurt Recktenwald, Stephen Rier, Sam Scovill, Pamela Sharp, Vasili Soutoukis, Kenneth and Laura Spencer, Chad Strausbaugh, Al Stern, Monika Stern, George and Jewel Thomas, Charley Underdahl, Brenda Webster, Pat Whelan, Caleb Winig, and Elaine Wrich.



FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING

Virginia Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



**St. Stephen Lutheran Church
612 Jamestown Road
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The Quill www.saintstephenlutheran.net April 2025

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