

Re-Established Connections

By Kathy Cummings

Ideas From Churches, June 2026

Annual Mission Festival



Grace Lutheran Church – Ridgecrest, California

Grace Lutheran Church in Ridgecrest, California, has had a long history of supporting their mission partners, but as frequently happens, the list of mission partners got set on autopilot. The partners were simply being voted on – without being given much thought, if any – until the congregation had lost most of the relational component with the mission partners to whom they were sending money to help support. This was the situation when Pastor Kris Madsen was called to minister to Grace in the summer of 2018. After recognizing this disconnect had become the norm, he was determined to rectify that situation.

Following COVID, Pastor Kris had an opportunity to re-establish a connection between Grace and those mission partners they were supporting. His idea for reacquainting the congregation with their mission partners was putting on a mission festival in January of 2024 to coincide with the beginning of the church fiscal year. The idea required pulling together a team of people from the congregation and planting the seed of his idea, which germinated throughout 2023. Having put together a team of just the right people, his idea of a mission festival became a reality.



Pastor Kris Madsen

Grace's Mission Team



Terry Kuhlman

Ann Pruett

Kim Perkins

Pat Gooch

Luke Kelley

Jonathan Espindola

Kathy Cummings

The team constructed storyboards for each mission partner to show who they are, where they serve and what they do. Since that first festival in 2024, the storyboards have become a staple for our mission festivals to show our congregation which mission partners we will be supporting at the beginning of each year. We update the storyboards annually.

Grace's Mission Festivals



Each of Grace's mission partners was contacted by team members for information, brochures and small items to place in front of their storyboard – items the congregation members could take home after the festival as reminders of their mission partners. Those contacts resulted in our receiving several boxes of such items and also brought Mim Nellermo of China Service Ventures ([CSV](#)) to personally represent their mission to Chinese people.

Mim Nellermo, China Service Ventures

Since Grace offers two services on Sunday mornings, it was decided the best time to hold the mission festival would be after the second service, which ends at lunchtime. A lunch menu for the first Mission Festival included international foods from all the areas our mission partners serve: Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, New Mexico's Navajo reservation, and Los Angeles, California. The menu has changed from year to year, but the timing has stayed the same.



Mission partner display at Festival



Mission partner display at Festival



Mission Festival gathering at Grace Lutheran Church

Since China Service Ventures personal representation at Grace's first mission festival, the team incorporated inviting mission partners to participate in the event each year since. Participation includes preaching the sermons at both services, offering a presentation on their mission between services and joining us for lunch.

The Executive Director of Spiritual Orphans Network (SON), Pastor David Breidenbach, and his wife, Angela, came to the festival in January of 2025. Their visit inspired Pastor Kris to consider the possibility of a team of Grace members joining one of the SON mission trips to Eastern Europe in 2027.

The 2026 mission festival saw the return of Mim Nellerhoe with her husband, Pastor Jeff. Because they were preparing a mission trip to Hawaii, the lunch had a luau theme to encourage members of Grace to participate.

Grace is looking forward to continuing the annual mission festival with Pastor Bill Moberly of Awakening Lives to World Missions (ALWM) in January 2027.



Kathy Cummings joined Grace Lutheran's Missions and Service Team in February 2023. She serves as editor of *Mission Connect* (a special mission-focused edition of Grace's newsletter, *Grace Vine*), which relates correspondence and updates monthly from Grace's ministry partners to the congregation. Kathy also coordinates Grace's annual Missions Festivals.

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Links:

Grace: <https://gracelutheran.org/>

CSV: <https://www.chinaserviceventures.org/>

SON: <https://sonetwork.org/>

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>