

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
1326 South 26 Street  
Omaha, NE 68105-2380

**Return Service Requested**  
**Dated Material**

**Email:** [graceluth@graceluth.com](mailto:graceluth@graceluth.com)  
**Web Site:** [www.graceluth.com](http://www.graceluth.com)

**REGULAR SUNDAY EVENTS**  
**9:00 A.M. Christian Education**  
**10:30 A.M. Worship Service**

**Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker**  
**Editor/Church Secretary – Benhi Khabeb**  
**Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr**  
**Organist - Lynda Laird**  
**Sexton - Brian Sutej**  
**Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill**  
**Intern - Vicar Angela Khabeb**

**Non-Profit Org.**  
**U.S. Postage**  
**PAID**  
**Omaha NE**  
**Permit No. 39**

*Inspired By Christ, it is our mission  
to share God's Word and Love in  
care and in service to all.*

**December 2009**  
**January 2010**



# **THE GRACE MESSENGER**

# Council Notes



## 2009 Council Members

Ron Adrian                      June Hilmer                      Gloria Moore    Pastor Laaker  
Andrew Edwards                Arlone Farber                  Vicky Cox        Vicar Angela Khabebe  
Sarah Emery (Sec)               David Nange                    Ernest Olson

\*\*\*\*\*

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula    Treasurer: Margie Sutej

The regular meeting of the Council was held November 10<sup>th</sup>. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the family of Gloria Moore as they continue to struggle with illness. Rick, her son has been experiencing side effects from the scar tissue left from his brain tumor, Sandy is undergoing more tests, and Amy Johnson, her niece, is suffering from brain cancer. We pray for Gloria herself as she undergoes eyelid surgery and as she battles with Richard's billing issues; we pray for Ken Catlett as he continues his fight with cancer; for Ron's neighbor, Angelo Benaci, as he deals with an infection following a stomach aneurism, for Ernie's friends Lisa Cervendy with her 1 year of sobriety and Scott Strunc as he deals with the death of his mother. We pray for Angela and her family as they navigate her first call. We rejoice over all of the new births, including a number of Sarah's friends and Ernie's cousin Jason Nenken with the early birth of their child.

Pastor led devotions from Micah 5.4 and Matthew 9.36. Micah reminds us to take faith! Bring God back into the center. God is responsible & will feed his people. Matthew reminds us that God has compassion on the harassed and insecure, helpless, unaccepted & left out.

Visions for Ministry: The Council is reading "*Radical Welcome*" by Stephanie Spellers. We discussed transforming into new behaviors. If the inside of our church does not directly reflect the outside, then we continue to have work to do. Please read pages 121-134 in the book by the next meeting.

Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. Please continue to give generously.

Christian Education: Christmas program will be on 12/20.

Evangelism/Outreach: Mission Interpreter is needed. Would you be interested?

Finance: \$545 was raised for CROP walk, and \$83 for Gideons.

Property: The new sound system is wonderful! Also discussed further the request for handicapped parking.

Service/Social Ministry: Halloween party had 130 people attend! What a success!

Support/Stewardship: 120<sup>th</sup> Celebration of the church was great!

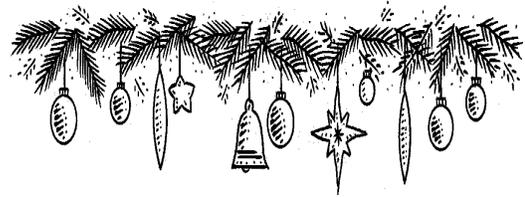
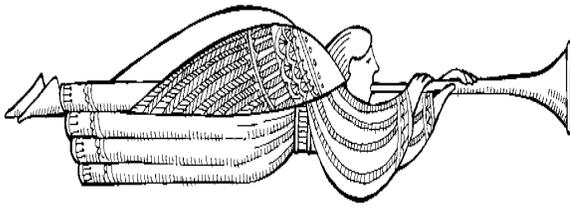
Worship: Remember that we will be hosting the Thanksgiving Eve service for 4 other congregations. Remember to bring treats for fellowship afterward!

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: No new report.

Announcements: Sarah will bring treats and lead prayer for our December meeting.

## *From the Pastor*



Soon we will see that wonderful Children's holiday classic "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas." I trust you'll recall in the story how the Grinch enters all the homes by way of their chimneys disguised as Santa Claus. He takes all the presents and ornaments, the trees and stockings, and even their food down to the last morsel. He drags his loot up to his mountain and then looks down upon Whoville with a sinister grin. He is listening for the cries and wailings of the people to start as they wake up on Christmas morning to discover a Christmas lost. What he hears instead surprises him. Up from the town of the Whos comes a joyful Christmas carol. They are singing. Why he asks. It is because, he learns, Christmas resides not in things but in the heart that is thankful. He could not steal their gratitude.

Our forefathers were not so much thankful for something as they were thankful in something. In bounty or in want they were thankful. In feast or in famine they were thankful. In joy or in misery they were thankful. There is a big difference between being thankful for something and being thankful in something.

There was a wonderful hymn written in 1607 by a German by the name of Martin Reinkardht. The name of the hymn is "Now Thank We All Our God." In the year that Reinkardht wrote that hymn it is interesting to note that over 6000 persons in his German village, including his wife and his children, died of pestilence. Yet, in the midst of that catastrophic social and personal loss Reinkardht set down to pen this great hymn of praise: 'Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices.' The Christian faith affirms that in the midst of everything--in death, in loss, in hardship--we are to turn to God in praise.

This does not mean that we are to put on a false front of happiness. It does not mean that we are to try to psych ourselves into feeling better. Rather we are thankful in times of hardship because we know that, just as on Calvary's hill, it is God who has the final word. We know that in any and all circumstances the victory is ours through faith in Christ Jesus.

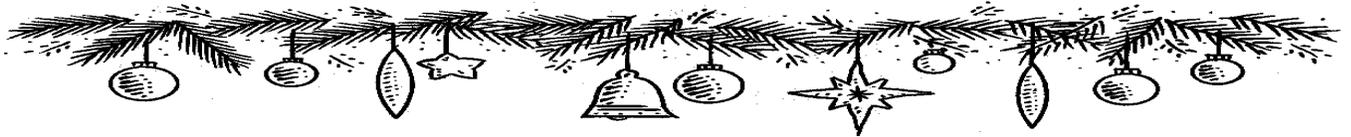
I discovered that in the Bible the words for gratitude and faith are interchangeable. If one has faith one will also have a sense of thankfulness. If one is thankful one must also be a person of faith. You show me a person who is not thankful, whose attitude is that life has somehow short-changed them, and I will show you a person who does not have a complete faith in God.

I am delighted to serve as your pastor. I have faith that God is at work among us. I am thankful for the wonderful people that we get to serve. May our love and care shine in service to all.

*Pastor Laaker*



Merry Christmas!  
Feliz Navidad!  
From Your Interfaith Director  
and Staff.



### Interfaith Health Service: Spotlight on Latinas in Action

This month marks the beginning of a semi-regular feature that will be posted on Interfaith's website, *interfaithhealth.org*. Gema and I plan to try and interview a Latinas in Action participant each month. One of our childcare directors, instructors, youth club (Amigos in Action) participants or one of our regular Zumba and educational participants will be featured. We will not publish every interview in the congregational newsletters, but wanted to let folks know where to find additional interviews in the future.

To start things off, I asked Vanessa, one of our Amigos in Action youth group members to be our first featured guest. Vanessa and her mother and 2 brothers have been attending Latinas in Action faithfully since our program began. It is always a treat to see Vanessa and her family and hear about their week. I have had the privilege of working fairly closely with Vanessa, in particular, over the years. She may not remember this, but when we first met, she was shy and quiet but always ready with a beautiful smile. These days, Vanessa is one of our regular participants and she has grown in confidence and maturity. She would not be described as shy by any of her peers. She is extremely intelligent, quick-witted, caring and gracious, and a loving older sister.

Here are some highlights of my IHS conversation with Vanessa:

Age: 12

School: Norris

Something about me not everyone knows about me:

"I have a dog. I've had Bella since she was a puppy. She is a year and a half old but she is NOT named after the lead character in those books everyone at school is reading." (Twilight series)

I like:

"Sleeping, eating, talking to my friends, soccer, saxophone, vanilla ice cream, my favorite school subject is math."

In the future, I want to:

"Be a pastry chef or an artist."

God has blessed me:

"With my family and my life."

A favorite memory of the past year:

"The day before Thanksgiving last year, my mom and I got up really early, around 6 in the morning. We went to No Frills in South Omaha and bought all the spices and ingredients for making a the turkey my dad got from his work. It was fun because it was just me and my mom cooking. We were surprised at how well the turkey turned out. We went over to my grandmother's house to celebrate the day and let's just put it this way—there were no leftovers from our turkey! Everyone else liked it as much as we did!"

Please look for additional features on the website. And please continue to lift up our ministry and our wonderful participants like Vanessa in your prayers.

Virginia McGill, *Interfaith Health Service*



Christmas Worship  
at  
Grace Lutheran Church

We welcome you  
To worship with us!

December 20, 2009  
Youth Christmas Program  
During the Worship Service  
10:30 a.m.



Christmas Eve Service  
You are cordially Invited!

December 24, 2009  
4:30 p.m.  
&  
Candle Light Service  
11:00 p.m.

Candles  
Carols  
Readings  
Scripture

# W/ELCA Board Meeting and Circle Meeting

January 19 at the church.  
1:00 p.m.  
Hostess and Bible Study Leader: Barb Nelson



*Women of the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in America*



**Prayer Service**  
**Monday, January 18, 2010**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**1326 S 26 St.**  
*People of all Faiths Welcome!*

Come for a quiet time of Meditation,  
Soft lighting, Gentle Music, Prayer and Anointing for Healing.

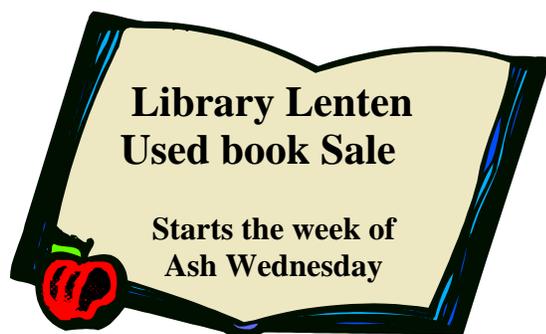
## Got Your 2010 Scripture Calendar Yet?

This is a beautiful, high quality calendar  
with scripture verses and wonderful scenes.

Similar calendars at the mall and stationary shops sell for up to \$12.00!

**Buy Them for Gifts or for Yourself.**

Only \$5.00 each  
Hurry! Quantities are Limited!



“Let us read and let us dance -  
two amusements that will never  
do any harm to the world.”

Voltaire

## Start saving your good used books !

The 4th Annual Used Book Sale will begin on Ash  
Wednesday, February 17th.

Donate good used books, CD's, DVD's and videos  
for our Lenten Used Book Sale.

A Box will be provided for your donations at the  
beginning of January.

Monies raised go for Library books and projects.



# Stewardship Minute

*Monthly reflections on our role  
as managers of God's blessing.*

*"Effective Stewardship" by Kenneth L. William*

The Lord Jesus was very clear in His description of how God empowers us when He made this statement as recorded in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Power, genuine power, God-given power, accompanies our salvation that is given to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By God's grace through faith, the Spirit of God then enables us to do the work of God.

But even prior to receiving God's power through faith in Christ, we are beneficiaries of God's power. Whether we describe the creative act of Christ in bringing the world into being or how He holds all things together by His word, all of us are the direct beneficiaries of God's power.

In fact, seeing God's power in action is one of the wonderful by-products that comes from studying the Scriptures. We soon realize that the God of Elijah is alive and well today and that He provides for us as He did for the prophet of old. We recognize that the God of Daniel maintains His rule over the affairs of men. While God may not shut the mouths of literal lions for us as He did for Daniel or rescue us from a hot fiery furnace as He did for Daniel's companions, God continues to demonstrate His power as we trust Him implicitly to provide for us. The words of First Kings 8:56 stand as a beacon on a hill: ". . . not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke through his servant Moses." And Isaiah's words ring out loudly and clearly as he proclaims that God ". . . gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless."

It's in our response to God's power and God's ownership of all things that we have difficulty. We tend to underestimate God's power, and our response is sometimes pitifully weak. As J. Hudson Taylor, great missionary to China, said, "Many Christians estimate difficulties in the light of their own resources and thus attempt little and often fail in the little they attempt. All of God's giants have been weak [people] who did great things for God because they reckoned on His power and presence with them." Or as F. B. Meyer observed so well, "After all, it is not so much what we do for God that counts as it is what we let Him do for us." And that certainly fits the picture painted in Isaiah 26:12 where the prophet states, ". . . all that we have done, you have done for us."

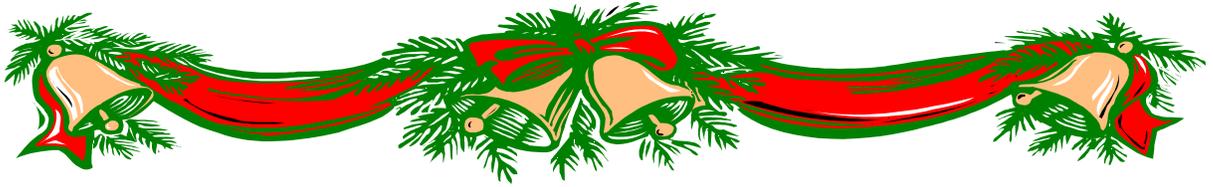
Frankly, though, as we respond to God's power and ownership of all things, frequently, we put other things or people first on our list of priorities. Sometimes, in fact, what we make available to the Lord amounts to little more than glorified leftovers.

Leftovers are such humble things,  
We would not serve them to a guest,  
And yet we serve them to our Lord,  
Who deserves the very best.  
We give to Him leftover time,  
Stray minutes here and there,  
Leftover cash we give to Him,  
Such few coins as we can spare.  
We give our youth unto the world,  
To hatred, lust and strife;  
Then in declining years we give  
To Him the remnant of our life.

Grace Lutheran's Stewardship Theme for 2010  
"Empowered By God- Responding By Grace!"

*Ask God what God wants to do through you in 2010?*

# Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends



## Grace Church Member, Family and Friend Requests

- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found. (member)
- ◆ Mae Lane - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Grace Traynor - Ongoing health issues. (daughter of Norma Olson)
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - As he struggles with heart issues. (member)
- ◆ La Vonne Moss -Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Fern Matson - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Elna Burns - Suffered a stroke sister of Don Olson (member)
- ◆ Kristine (Nelson) Mauler- Treatment for her cancer. (daughter of Barbara Nelson))
- ◆ Wendy Henexson- Recovery from transplant surgery. (daughter of Pastor Liz Conner)
- ◆ Lado family - as they grieve the past of their father and husband.

### Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Mae Lane  
Richard Moore  
Thelma Harrahill - (In Kansas with her children)

### Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Church.

Pray for the Council Members. Ask God to bless their ministry among us.

Pray for strength and spiritual wisdom for the leaders in the local church and the Nebraska Synod:

Pastor Laaker  
Vicar Angela and family  
Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod  
Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- ◆ Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Titus Duli, David Nange and Charles Tuw are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

Let's encourage each other as we see God's hand in answering our prayers





**4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  
Monday thru Thursday**

**Games, Crafts, and Fun  
Geared for Elementary Kids!**

**Free!**

Director, Brenda Spahr

There will be no After School Program during winter break. The last day in December will be Thursday, December 18th. The program will resume on January 11th, 2009.

Happy Holidays from Brenda and the Kids of the AfterSchool Program!



## 2010 Flower Chart

The 2010 Flower Chart will be posted on the bulletin board outside the church office.

The Flower Chart sign-up is your opportunity to sponsor flowers for a special Sunday in honor of an important event in your family's life or in memory of someone dear to you. The cost to sponsor flowers for a Sunday is \$12.00.

We need volunteers to sign up each month to pick up the flowers for the altar.

**Sign up on the Flower Chart.**

The flowers need to be picked up before 10:00 a.m. each Sunday morning at the Hy-Vee at 50th and Center. The church is billed so you will not need to pay for them at the time of pick up.

*Contact Marilyn Van Ormer or Barb Narducci for more details.*

### Great Gift Idea!

#### 2010 God's Creation Calendar

*Fundraiser for the  
Grace Lutheran Church Library*

**Only \$5.00**

High Quality, Comparable to  
Calendars at the mall selling for  
\$12.00!

**Hurry!**

When they're gone...  
They're GONE!



*New  
Offering envelopes  
Will be on the on the  
Table at the back of the  
Sanctuary on December  
13th*





# "Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service



**Project Hope**  
The Theme for January is  
Canned Soup or Stew.

*Peanut butter is always in short supply!*

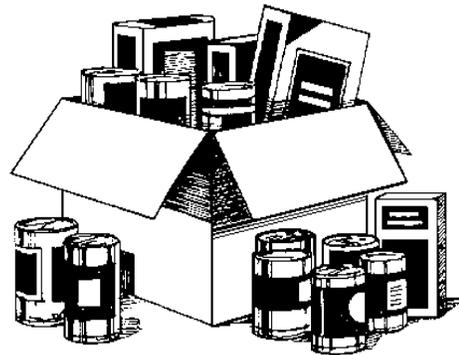
Project Hope needs boxes of zip lock bags in quart or gallon size, soup, macaroni, pasta, rice, diapers, bathroom tissue and feminine hygiene items.

Project Hope is also looking for good books, magazines and children's toys to include in the client's food bag. If you have some new toys, gently used toys, or adult/children's books, please put them on the shelf in the Upper Fellowship Hall.

## What Goes into a Food Bag at Project Hope?

- 1 Cereal
- 2 Canned chicken (or tuna)
- 1 Elbow Macaroni
- 2 Fruits
- 1 Peanut Butter
- 4 Vegetables
- 1 Tomato Sauce
- 1 Pork & Beans
- 2 Canned Soup or Ramen
- 2 Macaroni & Cheese
- 1 Sleeve of Crackers
- 1 bag of Popcorn
- 1 package of Cookies

One more bag is provided per one to two additional members in a family.  
A selection of frozen foods is given as available from the Food Bank.



## The Mitten Tree is up!

Thank you to all the folks that have donated gloves, mittens, scarves, socks and other gifts of warmth. These gifts will be donated at the end of December to area shelters.

There is still time to make a difference!

Winter items are needed in all sizes.  
Bring your donations and place them on the tree.



# News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church

## HALLOWEEN PARTY – OCTOBER 30, 2009

Where has November gone? It seems like Halloween was just last week!

Once again, this year's party was a success. Between 130-150 folks attended. Sixty five attendees signed in for the costume competition. Seven favorites were selected from votes submitted by guests and helpers. Our seven winners were: Katelyn, Kaissa, Atarah, Aaron, Donavan, Madison and Tom.

Thanks to everyone who helped make our party a success, from handing out flyers to clean up after the party. Every effort is very much appreciated, including all donations! We are blessed to have such willing members and friends who make this annual event possible.

**You ghouls are the best!**

Janet Hula

To our dear friends at Grace Lutheran Church,

We would like to express our deepest thanks to the people who made my 101st birthday so memorable.

The outpouring of cards, best wishes and gifts was astonishing. God has been gracious to provide so many good friends!

May God bless you all as much as your love has blessed us.

Thank you very much.

Gertrude Hufford.

Thank You,

I want to thank everyone who helped me celebrate my 80th birthday. It truly is an honor to the loving, sharing and caring manner of the my sisters and brother' s at Grace.

Your brother in Christ,  
Don Olson



Thanks to

- ♥ All the folks who have prepared food, served food, taught lessons, led or helped with crafts, led games and all the preparation necessary to have a successful Wednesday Faith Quest Program. Wednesday Faith Quest will resume in January after the Christmas and New Year holidays are over.
- ♥ Brenda Spahr for organizing a Children's Christmas Program this year. The program will be presented on December 20th. Brenda also directs the After School Program Monday through Thursday during the school year.
- ♥ Jerry Van Ormer, Ken Hilmer and Bob Moss for their care of church property issues such as lawn care, snow blower repairs and general handyman work.
- ♥ Jack Williams for his diligent care of the plants and trees in the front entryway.



# Luke Christmas Puzzle

## WORD LIST

afraid	great	tidings
all	heavenly	time
amazed	host	told
angel	in	us
appeared	inn	
baby	Jesus	
be	Joseph	
Bethlehem	kept	
betrothed	let	
birth	line	
born	Lord	
bring	made	
Caesar	men	
census	Nazareth	
Christ	no	
day	peace	
end	pondered	
expecting	praising	
fields	register	
Gabriel	Savior	
Galilee	see	
glorifying	shepherds	
God	son	
gone	swaddling	

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y
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a m a z e d o i e e v a j
r l h h l r j x i
c f n s d e o t p o a
m h a g d d s l t e r n l
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I MAY NOT BE A "WISE MAN," BUT AT LEAST I NEVER GOT SO LOST I HAD TO ASK HEROD FOR DIRECTIONS.



**Hmmmm....**

**If you're in a vehicle going the speed of light, what happens when you turn on the headlights?**

**Why do we sing "Take me out to the ball game" when we're already there?**

**When you go in for a job interview, I think a good thing to ask is if they ever press charges.**

[www.ahajokes.com](http://www.ahajokes.com)



## Jokes to Tell at the Christmas Table to Annoy the Relatives

Source: <http://www.ahajokes.com>

Q: If athletes get athletes foot, what do astronauts get?  
A: Missletoe!

Q: What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?  
A: Frostbite.

Q: Why was Santa's little helper depressed?  
A: Because he had low elf esteem.

Q: Why does Santa have 3 gardens?  
A: So he can ho-ho-ho.

Q: Where do polar bears vote?  
A: The North Poll.

Q: What do you get when you cross an archer with a gift-wraper?  
A: Ribbon hood.

Q: Why do birds fly south for the winter ?  
A: Because it's to far to walk.

Q: What kind of bird can write?  
A: A PENguin.

Q: What do you call a cat on the beach at Christmas time?  
A: Sandy Claus!

Q: How do sheep in Mexico say Merry Christmas?  
A: Fleece Navidad!

Q: What nationality is Santa Claus?  
A: North Polish.

Q: Why does Santa's sled get such good mileage?  
A: Because it has long-distance runners on each side.

Q: What do you call a bunch of grandmasters of chess bragging about their games in a hotel lobby?  
A: Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer!

Q: What did the ghosts say to Santa Claus?  
A: We'll have a boo Christmas without you.

Q: What do snowmen eat for breakfast?  
A: Snowflakes.

Q: If Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus had a child, what would he be called?  
A: A subordinate claus.

Q: Why does Santa Claus go down the chimney on Christmas Eve?  
A: Because it " soots " him!

Q: What do you do if Santa gets stuck in your chimney?  
A: Pour Santa flush on him.

Q: Did you hear that one of Santa's reindeer now works for Proctor and Gambel?  
A: Its true . . . Comet cleans sinks!



"You'll know it's almost over when they sing 'Hal and Lulu, Hal and Lulu' real loud."



"Your father is 'Christian Lite.' He only goes to church on holidays."