

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
1326 South 26 Street
Omaha, NE 68105-2380
402-341-7730



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Email: graceluth@graceluth.com
Web Site: 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 – Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Nenchi Ilka
Families In Action - Virginia McGill
Lutheran Volunteer - Matt Kong



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



2012

THE
GRACE
MESSENGER



2012 Council Members

John Boato
Vicki Cox
Sarah Emery

Ralph Fitle
June Hilmer
David Hufford

Greg Hula
Carolyn Matson
Samantha Trejo
Pastor Laaker

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on November 20. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us; Vicki's friend Gwen Grady as she deals with her terminal cancer. We pray for her brother in law, Ron Hansen with his emergency surgery. We pray for the healing of Ken Hilmer and his ongoing health issues, for June's sister Maxine who is currently in a coma after suffering a seizure. We pray for Sarah's co-worker Denise, and her boss's wife Julie, both of whom will undergo surgery for breast cancer in the next week. We pray for Greg's friend Kirk Mobley and his family, after just losing his sister Kathy to leukemia. We pray for peace & stabilization in areas of unrest; the Gaza strip, as well as in our own country. We lift up those traveling during the holiday season, troops away from their families, and those on the East Coast struggling with rebuilding efforts. We pray for a positive second term for President Obama and other political leaders, and for our own Pastor as he faces uncertain changes in his own life & ministry.

Pastor led devotions from 1 Samuel 10:7 and 1 Corinthians 10:24. The first reminds us not to worry about tomorrow, but to live each moment remembering that God is with us. The second reminds us to think of our fellow human beings in all that we do.

Visions for Ministry: The Council completed reading Missional Renaissance. We focused on the idea of building and promoting real community vs simply taking care of ourselves. This will require a sort of cultural shift in which we involve ourselves with others and form relationships intentionally. This is how faith and community develop and grow, within our interpersonal relationships. We have completed the book, although we may return for more discussion.

Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. We operate on a very judiciously with your donations. Please give generously.

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: Matt Kong is working diligently with the Sudanese youth.

Finance: Church Mutual cancelled the conference call, and there has been no further contact.

Property: The front railing has been fixed, the gutters are set to be installed next week, and an estimate is coming soon for replacing the South lights on the building and installing a new North light on the building.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

Support/Stewardship: Materials were received in the mail; our dedication will be on Sunday, November 25.

Continued...

Worship: Thanksgiving service will be at 7 p.m. at Pella. Our Christmas Eve service will be set at 5 p.m. again this year. Our Advent services will be a new format, including dialogue.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: No new report.

Announcements: Our council will be meeting next Tuesday evening with the council of Bethel Lutheran, to discuss options / thoughts relating to the possibilities of sharing ministry, yoking the congregations, and sharing Pastor Laaker. Let's remain in thoughtful prayer over the entire situation. June will bring treats for our December meeting.

[The Red Fox in Christmas Snow](#)

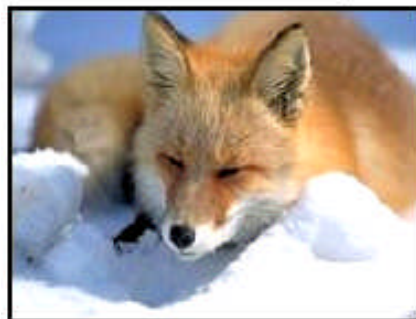
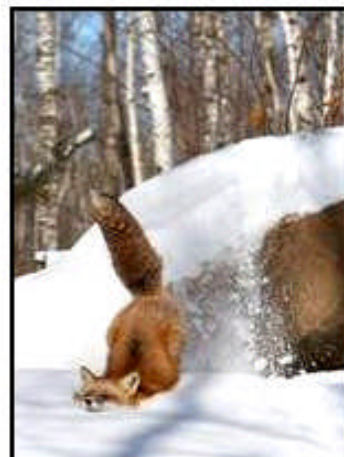
Description: The Red Fox is about the size of a large cat. In fact, although it is a member of the dog family, some of its habits are very cat like as well. Appearance wise, it has a reddish coat with white underneath and a big bushy tail with normally a white tip.

Habitat: Foxes live in many areas of the world. Will regularly has a vixen and her cubs living near to the bottom of his garden in suburban Hampshire, England. They can live in the deepest wilderness or right in your backyard with equal ease.

Diet: Foxes are carnivores. That means that they eat other animals. Their favourite food include rodents, rabbits and small birds. If they live near people, they are famous for raiding hen houses and stealing chickens.

Not what you would expect from a fox. Perhaps when they see snow for the first time they are as carefree and crazy as car drivers.

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From guy-sports.com



“Imported from Bethlehem”

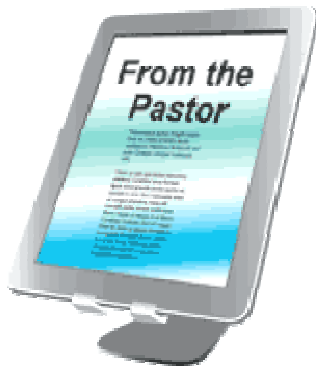
During the Christmas season in 2011, the five-campus Kensington Church of Troy, MI, put on a holiday program called “Imported from Bethlehem” to deliver a message of peace at Christmas.

The church earlier had sent a seven-member team, including musicians, to the Holy Land to capture the stories of Israelis and Palestinians who are building bridges to peace in the volatile region.

“Bethlehem is not only the birthplace of Jesus, but also where the promise of peace and joy began,” said Dan Mountney, a church director.

More than 10,000 people attended the free program.

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From JoyfulNoiseletter.com



As this newsletter goes to print, the elected leaders of Grace Lutheran and Bethel Lutheran will be meeting to begin joint conversations. Those conversations are intended to explore the possibilities of yoking, one with the other, to meet the future needs and ministry of both of these congregations. These conversations are necessary as we consider the new challenges and new opportunities that God places before us.

We experience change everyday. Change is an unavoidable part of life; at times, we welcome it and at other moments, we fear it. The circumstances before our two congregations now challenges us to come to terms with change on many levels – in our hearts, in our families, in our communities of faith and in the communities that we serve. For people of faith, openness to change is a vital part of hearing the Good News and living as Disciples of Christ Jesus.

When facing change the first challenge is discernment of God's will. Discernment requires us to ask whether the change is good and necessary. Some things, such as the Word of God, do not change. Other things, such as Church discipline, interpretations and some structures may change depending upon the circumstances and situations. Discernment, study, and honest dialogue are necessary whenever we face potential change in our congregations.

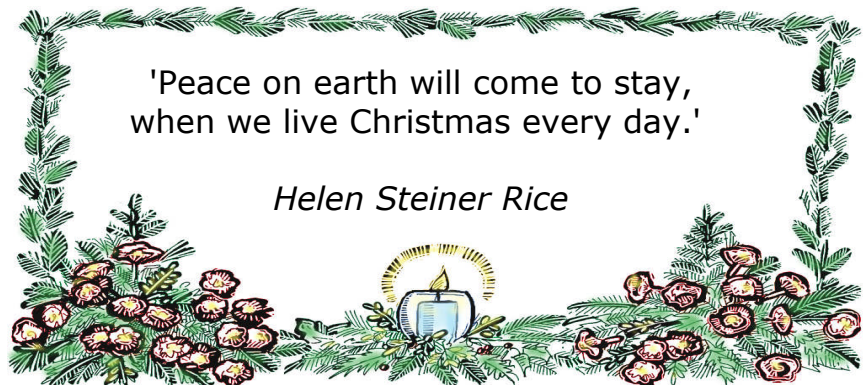
After we have gone through discernment about any potential change, the second challenge is openness to implementing necessary changes. The key components for facilitating change in the structure of a parish community are prayer, vision and leadership.

So, you can see we have much work to do to consider the challenge and opportunity of yoking these two congregations.

Now you may be asking, what is a yoked parish? A yoked parish is two congregations being served by one full time pastor. Having one pastor serve two or more congregations is a long standing solution for getting seminary-educated pastors for congregations that face the reality of change. Sometimes this is due to financial conditions; sometimes it is due to other circumstances. We have seen this practice in Nebraska most often in our rural communities. It will be an adventure to see if it is possible and workable in the urban context.

I ask for your prayers. Pray that the Holy Spirit guide our conversations, instill in each of us an openness to listen, ask the appropriate questions and trust the directions that arise. Pray for a clear vision of the ways this yoking can serve Christ through these two ministries. Pray for wisdom to surround the leadership of both congregations.

*Trusting in the Spirit of Christ,
Pastor Laaker*





Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

"Give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day."

1 Kings 8:28

Those we pray for named below are members unless otherwise specified:

- ◆ The family of Louise Alsager as they go through this time of mourning.
- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found.
- ◆ Jim Harrahill - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ferne Matson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ LaVonne Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Don Olson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Urbano Vasquez - Recovery time following hospitalization.
- ◆ Rex Olson - Ongoing health issues. (Don Olson's brother.)
- ◆ Wanda Black - Ongoing health issues. (Don Olson's sister.)
- ◆ Norma Courtney - Ongoing health issues. (Arlone Farber's Mom.)
- ◆ Bob Hargis - Recovery from his stroke. (Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer's son-in-law.)
- ◆ Theresa Jorgensen - Recovery following surgery. (Cody Jorgensen's Mom.)
- ◆ Kevin Jorgensen - Health issues. (Cody Jorgensen's Dad.)
- ◆ Jean Matson - Ongoing health issues. (Andrea Spahr's Grandma.)
- ◆ Jeff Van Overen - Praise God, Jeff's cancer is in remission. (Friend of many.)



Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Gertrude Hufford - Immanuel Village.
Barbara Narducci - Home
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn.
Jack Williams - Immanuel Village.

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
Bishop Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod
Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- ◆ Pray for the Sudanese community in general. David Nange, John Boato 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.*



**Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
December 24, 2012
5:00 p.m.**



Oh! Come all ye faithful! Come celebrate the joy and wonder of Christ's birth! Come share in the tradition of singing "Silent Night" by candlelight. Bring family and friends so that together, we enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit of Christmas.

Each year, people from Grace Lutheran Church bring donations of mittens, gloves, scarves, and other warm items and place them on the tree. These gifts of warmth are donated to area shelters.

The Christmas Mitten Tree will stand in the upper fellowship hall in December.

During the special sales this holiday season, consider adding a pair of mittens or a scarf or two to your shopping basket.



POINSETTIAS
Cost: \$8.00 each

A Sign Up sheet
has been posted on the Bulletin Board

The Deadline for Ordering is December 6th

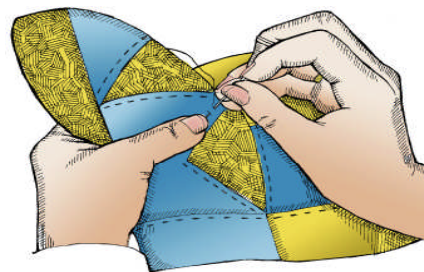


Give Glory to God through decorating the sanctuary during the Season of Advent. Be sure to designate whether you would like to take your flowers home after the holiday or donate them to the church for shut-ins.

**Quilting for Lutheran World Relief
on Mondays at 9:00 a.m.**

If you have the morning free, drop by and help cut squares and tie quilt tops on to the backs.

Coffee break and joke time is at 10:00 a.m.



QUILTING GROUP



*Confessions
Meditations
Healing*

**Wednesday Night
December 19, 2012**

7:00 p.m.

**Candle light Prayer Service
at Grace Lutheran Church.**

People of all faiths are welcome!

49 Quilts were sent this past November to the Lutheran World Relief Ingathering. Thank you Marilyn, LaVonne, June, and Eva for your dedication every Monday! To the people who receive them, the quilts are a tangible symbol of God's love and compassion.



**Grace Lutheran Church
Christmas Luncheon at
Piccolo Pete's Restaurant
2202 South 20th Street
Tuesday, December 18, 2012
1:00 p.m.
Everyone Welcome!**

Please plan to attend in the celebration and fellowship time. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board, or you can call the church office, 402-341-7730, with your planned reservation.



And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8



- ◆ Thank you to Marilyn and Jerry Van Ormer for their dedication in tending to the plants in the entry way, they continue to look welcoming.
- ◆ Thank you to Mary Laaker, Tom and Sarah Emery, for their ongoing care in the nursery during Sunday morning worship service.
- ◆ Thank you to Bob Moss and Jerry Van Ormer for their continuing efforts to maintain the church with any projects that need to be completed.
- ◆ Thank you to Nenchi Ilka, you are doing such a great job cleaning the church building!
- ◆ Thank you to Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer, Joe Narducci, Greg and Janet Hula, and Eva Martin who pick up altar flowers every Sunday morning.
- ◆ Thank you to Ron and Donna Adrian, and Brenda Spahr who take care of the altar, set up and take down communion.



Congratulations to Gertrude Hufford on the celebration of her 104th birthday!



We are blessed by her devotion to the Lord!



Dear Friends,
Your cards are wonderful. Each says something beautiful and what I like to hear. Thank you for those kind and precious thoughts. I enjoy going through them all again.
God bless you all,
Gertrude Hufford

Friendly reminder, if you haven't returned your Fall Stewardship information like the Time and Talent form or your Pledge card, you still have time to turn those in! Please mail to the church office or place them in the offering plate on Sunday mornings.





"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service



Special Pantry Needs for December:
Coffee / Tea / Cocoa

These are things our clients can not purchase with their food stamps and are always appreciated.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Deodorant | Dish soap |
| Can Openers | Toothbrush and toothpaste |
| Shaving Cream | Mouthwash (without alcohol) |
| Razors | Feminine hygiene products |
| Kleenex | Hair products (combs, brushes, picks) |
| Bar Soap | Dry Laundry Soap |
| Bathroom tissue | Shampoo |
| Diaper wipes | |
| Diapers, especially sizes 4, 5, 6 and pullups | |

Project Hope
4205 Boyd St
Omaha, NE 68111
402-453-7649

We always need paper or plastic bags.

Project Hope also has a Clothing Room and is in need of all sizes of clothing, Especially spring and summer clothing.



Community Baby Shower
Saturday, January 12, 2013
Grace Lutheran Church
1326 South 26th Street
402-341-7730
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.



Enjoy games, fellowship, and refreshments!

All items collected this day will benefit Project Hope.

Many items that cannot be purchased with food stamps are in a constant need to families. These items include diapers of all sizes, baby wipes, baby shampoo, baby laundry detergents, and a variety of clothing items.

Any questions, please call Lori Vazquez at 402-575-5504, or call the church office at 402-341-7730.



Hello all!

Since last I wrote, I was focused on getting more of a structure into the Sudanese bible study I hold on Sundays. I'm happy to report that slowly but steadily we're getting there. Just last week I organized an activity around the verses of that day. Many seemed receptive, so I look forward to progressing this further.



Indoor soccer is slowly becoming an activity that might not be in the best interests of the basement, so I've sought other activities that could take the place of that. A friend of mine mentioned that hacky sacks might be a fun alternative so I think we'll take games in that direction.

I'd also like to thank everyone who's helped me out. Brenda was kind enough to show me where the majority of the crafts and games were to be found, which is a phenomenal help towards indoor activities for all the kids. Bob also mentioned that he also had some supplies to refurbish some of the more damaged jump ropes, which is great for being sustainable. As one of the main practices of LVC is sustainability it's good to see this also implemented outside my home.

This was also one of the first Thanksgivings away from home. Although I had plans with my remaining housemates, I'm grateful to everyone who invited me to share a meal at their table. I realize that I'm lucky to be surrounded by very cordial and helpful people in my life, and for that I'm thankful.

Cheers!

Matt



Back by
Popular Demand!

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Buy Your 2013 God's Creation Calendar Today!
Fundraiser for the Grace Lutheran Church Library

Each calendar contains beautiful scenic photography enhanced with inspiring Scriptures from the Holy Bible.

Some features of our popular 12-month, 28 page calendar include:

- 12"x9" pages
- high-quality, heavy-weight stock
- gloss-coated photo pages
- matte-finished calendar grid pages
- a superb writing surface
- ample space to write appointments
- a special page for important phone numbers
- 2012 - 2014 year-at-a-glance calendars

[What Does The Christmas Angel Look Like?](#)

- Angels come in all shapes and sizes; all ages and skin types.
- For example, the little old lady who returned your purse last week.
- They come disguised as enemies, teachers, students, even fools.
- Like the taxi driver who told you that your eyes light up the world, when you smile.
- They don't take life too seriously, they travel light.
- Remember the small child who showed you the wonder in simple things.
- An angel leaves no forwarding address, they ask nothing in return.
- Like the poor man who offered to share his lunch with you.
- Like the rich man who showed you that it really is all possible, if only you believe.
- Remember the stranger who just happened to come along, when you had lost your way.
- Think back to the friend who touched your heart, when you didn't think you had one.
- Some cherubs have freckles, some have dimples, think of some with wrinkles, some without.
- They are hard to find when your eyes are closed, but when you choose to see, angels are everywhere you look.

So, open your eyes and count all your Angels; for you are truly blessed.



Just before Christmas God was looking down at Earth and saw all of the evil that was going on. He decided to send an angel down to Earth to check it out. So he called one of His best angels and sent the angel to Earth for a time. When she returned she told God, yes it is bad on Earth, 95% is bad and 5% is good.

Well, he thought for a moment and said, maybe I had better send down a second angel to get another point of view. So God called another angel and sent her to Earth for a time too. When the angel returned she went to God and told him yes, the Earth was in decline, 95% was bad and 5% was good.

God said this was not good. So He decided to email the 5% that were good and He wanted to encourage them, give them a little something to help them keep going.

Do you know what that email said?
Ah, so you didn't get one either?

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From guy-sports.com



Moving Forward by Faith

The life of faith is one that takes God at His word. It is one which involves every area of our lives, including how we use the resources which God has provided for us. Living by faith involves our time, talents and treasure.

Most of us have no problem giving God our time and our talents, but some seem to have a problem when it comes to our treasure. Some have forgotten the first premise of total stewardship: God owns everything. We are just managing what rightfully belongs to Him.

Accepting that premise requires us to believe what God has said concerning our material possessions. Accepting that premise requires us to exercise faith. Accepting that premise is essential if we are to give as we should.

But why should we give to a God we cannot see? And why should we be willing to trust this God who has chosen to reveal Himself primarily through the Scriptures? It all goes back to faith. As Hebrews 11:6 states so clearly, anyone who comes to God “. . . must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” So the question is, Do **you** believe that God exists? If so, do **you** really believe that He will reward those who earnestly seek Him? Do you really believe that He will keep His promises to **you**?

If so, you will demonstrate the kind of faith that people in the Old Testament demonstrated in the “first-fruits” offering. Before the crop was harvested, they would take a portion — a sample — and offer it to God. This was a fresh reminder of God’s ownership of everything and a way of saying, “Lord, we trust you, even before we see what the harvest will really be like, to provide for us.”

Similarly, God asks us to set aside a portion of what He has provided to us in direct proportion to our income. That takes faith. That takes a willingness to trust God to provide all that we need through what remains. That takes a recognition that we own nothing, that when we give, we are only returning to God what was His in the first place.

Giving is the only subject about which God says, in effect, “Prove me. Trust me. Put me to the test.” He does not say that about Bible reading, prayer, or even sharing our faith with others. Only about giving.

As you think about your giving over the past few months and what God would have you to give in the coming year here at Grace Lutheran Church, will you “prove” God? Will you put God to the test? Regardless of how circumstances appear, will you move forward by faith in obedience to God’s Word and to His leading in your life concerning your giving in 2013?

Max Lucado expressed it very well when he said, “Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. Faith is the belief that God will do what is right.” That kind of faith moves an individual forward. That kind of faith moves a family forward. That kind of faith moves a church like ours forward. And that kind of faith causes us to trust God and to believe that He keeps His promises.

Donald Grey Barnhouse once described an elderly lady who knew what it meant to trust God.

Someone said to her, “I believe that if you thought the Lord told you to jump through a stone wall, you would jump.” She replied, “If the Lord told me to jump through a wall, it would be my business to jump, and it would be His business to make the hole.”

In that spirit of doing all that God asks of us, will you move forward by faith individually and as a part of this fellowship concerning your giving for the coming year? As you consider your response to that question, please ask God to speak to your heart concerning your giving of your time, talents and financial resources in the coming year. As you do so, please remember these words from Hebrews 11: “. . . without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach God must believe that God exists and that God rewards those who seek God.”

Inherit the Mirth by Cuyler Black



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A reader wrote to Columnist Smiley Anders of the *Baton Rouge (LA) Advocate*:

“When I was about 13, we attended a small church. One of the wise men in the Christmas pageant was a big burly guy.

“When the three wise men knelt before the manger, I noticed he was shaking like he was crying.

“After the ceremony I asked him why he was crying.

“He said he wasn’t crying, he was laughing, and told me to go look in the manger.

“I walked down the aisle and discovered the doll portraying baby Jesus was cross-eyed!”

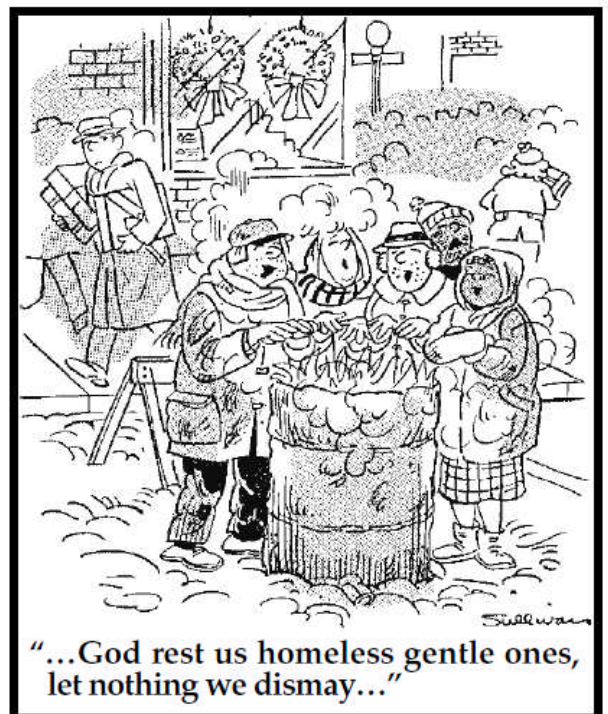
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Special Days in December at Grace Lutheran Church

December 11 - Grace Council Meeting.
December 12 - Photographers Club.
December 18 - Newsletter Assembly.
December 18 - Grace Christmas Luncheon.
December 19 - Prayer Service.
December 20 - Neighborhood Meeting.
December 24 - Christmas Eve Service.
December 25 - Merry Christmas!

Curious questions related to the English language:

- “If teachers taught, why didn’t preachers paught?”
- “If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?”
- “How come a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?”



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Bible Wordsearch



The Two Witnesses

Wordsearch 207

Rev.11:1-10

E	A	D	E	E	R	D	E	H	S	I	N	I	F	S
A	V	R	X	T	P	Y	G	E	B	I	R	T	T	I
B	S	I	C	E	C	T	E	L	R	E	O	E	H	E
Y	M	L	L	O	P	S	D	P	E	L	H	S	M	T
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B	T	O	E	O	D	E	T	R	P	E	K	O	K	L
L	H	R	U	O	N	E	P	T	A	T	D	M	C	G
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M	E	A	S	U	R	E	I	M	A	C	P	T	A	E
S	C	L	O	T	H	E	D	R	I	E	U	O	H	R
L	I	G	N	A	T	I	O	N	U	E	B	R	E	S
G	A	Z	E	U	G	A	L	P	H	B	S	T	C	P

Abyss	Clothed
Altar	Crucified
Attack	Devours
Beast	Enemies
Blood	Exclude
Bodies	Finished
Burial	Gentiles
Count	Measure
Court	Months
Egypt	Mouths
Gaze	Nation
Gloat	People
God	Plague
Harm	Prophets
Holy	Refuse
Olive	Sodom
Power	Strike
Reed	Temple
Tribe	Trample
Waters	

After you find all the hidden words the left over letters spell out a Bible verse reading from the top left to the bottom right

MORE PUZZLES AT:
<http://biblewordgames.com>

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Christmas Riddles

How many ears has Captain Kirk got?
Three: the left ear, the right ear, and the final front ear. Ben Miller

What do lions sing at Christmas?
Jungle bells!

When is a boat like a pile of snow?
When it's adrift.

How do snowmen get around?
On their icicles.

What does Santa call reindeer that don't work?
Dinner.

What do you call the fear of getting stuck in a chimney?
Santaclaustrophobia



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