

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



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

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary – Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Nenchi Ilka
Families In Action - Virginia McGill

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



2013

THE
GRACE
MESSENGER



2013 Council Members

John Boato	Sarah Emery	David Hufford
Vicki Cox	Ralph Fitle	Janet Hula
Andrew Edwards	June Hilmer	Eva Martin
		Pastor Laaker

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on July 9th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We rejoiced with David Hufford recounting his birthday celebration and the two year anniversary of freedom in Southern Sudan. We prayed for the victims, survivors and families of the Korean Aircraft that crashed in San Francisco and for the Canadian Train accident and flooding. We prayed for Ken Hilmer's health. We prayed for peace and stability in Omaha.

Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts." Readings were from Zephaniah 1:7 and Luke 12:37. They tell us that we must be alert and ready for the Lord at all times. We can do this by listening and serving.

Visions for Ministry: The Council continued discussing Can Our Church Live by Alice Mann. We talked about some questions that ask how we see culture, the local community and Grace Lutheran Church's role in the past and the present and are we equipped to present the fundamentals of Christianity in the future and how do we do that.

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

Christian Education: VBS will be July 14-July 18.

Evangelism/Outreach: Matt Kong's last Sunday with us will be July 21. We will recognize his work during worship and hold a picnic following worship.

Finance: Endowment allocations were approved.

Property: Our legal firm has filed suit against Church Mutual.

Service/Social Ministry: Neighbors South Habitat Coalition will soon finish the work on the house. Dedication will likely be in August.

Support/Stewardship: No new report.

Worship: Summer worship – council decided to place a survey form in the bulletin on Sunday, August 4. The survey will ask about keeping the service time at 9 am or changing it back to 10:30 am.

Unfinished Business: None

New Business: The ELCA celebrates its 25th Anniversary on September 8. What might we do to celebrate with a Day of Service? Lutheran Family Services Day is September 15. David Hufford has more information. Pastor Laaker presented a request from Iglesia Cristiana Principe de Paz for possible use of Grace's worship space for their worship. Council has requested to meet with Pastor Jimenez in August.

Announcements: Ralph Fitle will bring treats for our August meeting.



From the Pastor

In these months of transition, my emotions run the gamut. I was reading my daily post from Sojourners and this article appeared. I so appreciated its focus that I want to share it with you.

“In only four words — “But we had hoped” (Luke 24:21) — we find one of the most profound expressions of human emotion in the entire New Testament.

(A single pair of footprints. Photo courtesy grebcha/shutterstock.com)

“In the midst of all that was taking place around Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago, Cleopas “stood still, looking sad,” for his life had taken a surprising turn for the worse. He had hoped that Jesus “was the one to redeem Israel,” yet it appeared that such dreams were shattered. Because of it all, Cleopas was left to move forward into a reality that he had not previously imagined. *But we had hoped.*

“One can presume that Cleopas and his travel companion on the road to Emmaus not only felt shocked, lost, angry, and afraid, but also that their collection of emotions were representative of most who have come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. While many had expected Jesus to be with them “mighty in word and deed” for many years to come, he was suddenly removed from their presence. In light of all that took place, the dreams of those who believed in Jesus were abruptly dashed, and the community of disciples was left — both literally and metaphorically — wandering down the road into a future that seemed removed of joy and filled with despair. *But we had hoped.*

“David Lose discusses how at various points in life we all have either uttered or pondered such words. Our existence is filled with unforeseen twists and turns that can lead to distress, discontent, and even disillusionment. When our lives contain unanticipated struggle we hope for it all to be made well, and when all seems to be well we hope that it all will continue for as long as possible. While we as human beings are diverse in countless ways, we all have experienced sudden moments of unpredicted disappointment and we all have felt the torrential downpour of despair.

...*But we had hoped* the cancer would heal.

...*But we had hoped* the marriage would work.

...*But we had hoped* the promotion would come.

...*But we had hoped* the legislation would pass.

...*But we had hoped* the money would last.

...*But we had hoped* the children would behave.

...*But we had hoped... But we had hoped... But we had hoped... But we had hoped...*

“With these four profound words, we not only learn to relate with all that Cleopas and others were feeling immediately after the death of Jesus. We are also inspired to name and claim those moments of surprising disappointment that we also often experience.

“When dreams appear to shatter and our plans for the future do not match up with what has actually occurred, at times we react with anger and try to pass blame. Yet perhaps most of all, we are left wondering — like Cleopas and other disciples — where was God in the midst of it all? Was God not with us? Where was God when our secure and predictable future suddenly became insecure and unpredictable? Where was God when we felt pain by no fault of our own? Where was God when we cried, screamed, and shouted with sadness? Where was God when the path forward seemed to crumble and we were left to wonder how the pieces could be placed back together? *But we had hoped...*

Continued.....

“When Cleopas and the other disciples experienced deep grief, “their eyes were kept from recognizing” the presence of God in their midst, and this momentary spiritual disability kept them from seeing the awesome possibilities that were standing right in front of them. However, in an amazing twist of events, Jesus eventually opened Cleopas’ eyes, and in doing so Cleopas was shown a new way to walk an old path. For instead of disappointment and anger, Cleopas and his travel companion embraced the awesome new life that was awaiting them. Through it all, the two on the Road to Emmaus were shown how God was at work in the complexity of their daily lives — and no matter what the circumstances, they had nothing to fear and everything to embrace.

“Ultimately, the disciples were shown that the clouds of life will clear, the sun always rises, and the risen Jesus gives his followers burning hearts to keep moving forward on the path laid out before them. As we collectively look to the future and wonder what it all may bring, we can listen to the story of Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus. Just as God made their hearts burn within them back then, God continues to do the same for us here and now.

“More specifically, we are reminded that although most things in life never stay the same, we can be fully assured that one thing will remain unchanged: the promise of Jesus to accompany us.

“Whether the future brings that which was once expected, or even if the time ahead bring that which could not have been foreseen, in Jesus we are given the blessed assurance that we have nothing to fear. Through this, we are set free to experience life in its absolute fullness.

“And so, regardless of which path we are all called to travel, may we continue to look up, reach out, and see the awesome presence of God in every face we see and on every road we travel. For it is with God’s Spirit that we are given all that we need for the journey ahead.

“May we embrace the promise of God’s abiding presence, feel the comfort and challenge that comes with it, and together, may we move forward into an unknown future with confidence that all will indeed be well.”

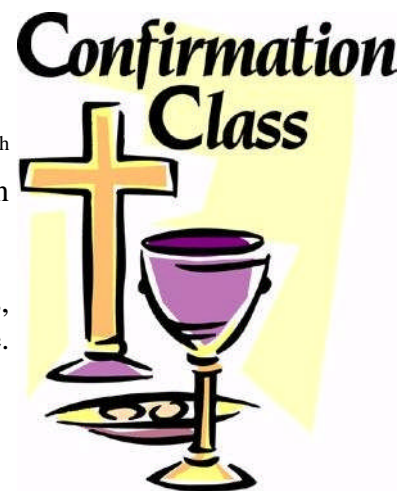
The author is Pr. Brian E. Konkol, co-pastor of Lake Edge Lutheran Church, Madison, WI. I find his words refreshing and renewing as I await God’s direction for the future. Please keep me in your prayers.

Pr. Damon Laaker

Confirmation – An educational ministry of the Christian Faith

Grace Lutheran offers the opportunity for young people, beginning at 6th grade, to participate in an intentional learning opportunity to strengthen their baptismal connection to Jesus Christ and his church.

Pastor Laaker will meet with interested persons, young people and adults, on Sunday, September 8. This will be an informational orientation time. Questions? Please call Pastor Laaker at 402-341-7730.





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:

- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found.
- ◆ Pastor Henry Gittler - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Jim Harrahill - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ David Hufford - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Carolyn Matson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ferne Matson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ LaVonne Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Robert Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Don Olson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Lori Vasquez - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Urbano Vasquez - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Norma Courtney - Ongoing health issues. (Arlone Farber's Mom.)
- ◆ Bob Hargis - Ongoing health issues. (Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer's son-in-law.)
- ◆ Christian Barajas - Cancer treatments. (Samantha Trejo, Angela & Alex Everitt's brother.)
- ◆ Ken Spahr - Recovery from a fall. (Andrea Spahr's grandpa.)

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Gertrude Hufford - Immanuel Village.

Ferne Matson - Her son, Ron's house.

Barbara Narducci - Home.

Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn.

Jack Williams - Brookstone Meadows, Elkhorn.

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 Damon Laaker, Grace Lutheran Church

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.*



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 the ESL tutors; Vicki Cox, Arlone Farber, Mary Laaker, and Amanda Vazquez, for making that connection with the students willing to learn and form friendships.
- ◆ 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 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.
- ◆ Thank you to all the volunteers who donated time, energy, and prayers to help create such a lasting impression to the youth who participated with this summer's Vacation Bible School.
- ◆ Thank you to Kids At Work for assisting with jobs around (inside and outside) the church building.
- ◆ Thank you to all the volunteers in their helpful assistance with this summer's Kids At Work summer program.

✦ Pastor Damon and the members of Grace,
✦ Thank you for the picnic celebrating my work at Grace this year! It meant a lot to me to see you all there and to have a chance to say my good byes. I also appreciate the gift of books containing photography of Omaha. Top-notch stuff and a great memento of my time here with you all. Thanks Again!
✦ Sincerely,
✦ Matt Kong
✦ Lutheran Service Corp Volunteer



5th Annual Lutheran Service Corps Wine Tasting Fundraiser

Saturday, August 24, 2013 from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. at the Soaring Wings Vineyard, Springfield, NE. Tickets are \$30 per person or \$50 for two people. Ticket includes a tasting of five wines, souvenir wine glass, and light appetizers. The Lutheran Service Corps will receive 10% of wine sales that day. Anyone interested in tickets please see Pastor Laaker.



Vacation Bible School Fun!

Paul (David) speaks out to youth and reminds them to write down their God sightings and to share God's love!



Below group Berea listens to the evenings schedule and writes down their God sightings for the day! Great Job!



Above group Colossae enjoys time outside with the Arena Games Leaders learning about activities from the time of Athens and trying out some of those games! Looks like fun!



Below group Antioch gives their team cheer with awesome energy! Cheer practice was fun!

Thanks to all the volunteers who put in time and energy to ensure this summers success in Athens! All the decorations were great and fun to see in the basement (Athens) during VBS week!



When I got back to my house today it occurred to me that tomorrow I'll have to hand in my keys to Grace for my final day of work. It's a bittersweet feeling. On one hand I'm excited to be heading back to my hometown of Redlands, CA, seeing friends and family on my road trip that commences this Sunday (7/28). On the other I realize just how much I will miss Grace and Omaha.



In some respects my position this year has been my first real job. It is my first full-time position out of college, and though I knew that I was only contracted for a year it feels weird to be leaving now. Some of my housemates have commented on the fact that the last few months have flown by, and while I would agree I think for me the downward slope really occurred around January.

Through my work with Grace and the Nebraska Synod I've been able to experience many different things that I otherwise would not have encountered had I not been a Lutheran Volunteer Corps member for the 2012-2013 year. For one, I'd never worked in a church or with children in a bible study or community outreach capacity before, so these experiences took some adjustment. My work with the Synod exposed me to areas of injustice that I hadn't thought of or never pursued beyond the root idea; hospital chaplains and immigration laws come to mind.

It's been a memorable experience at Grace. No longer will my Sundays be spent playing dodge ball or solving puzzles with Grace's Sudanese youth. The rest of my summer won't consist of time with the neighborhood children volunteering at the Josie Harper Hospice House, Together, Inc. and other organizations. I can picture all the members of the congregation that I've come to know over the past year, and I find it a shame that I won't see them next week.

Alas, as they say "all good things must come to an end". I want to thank you all for the warm welcome and friendships you've extended me. You won't be far from my thoughts and I shall not forget my time in Omaha. I left out my customary "hello all!" at the beginning of this article as it seemed odd to say when I'm on my way out, so I'll end with a Hawaiian salutation used in greeting and parting.

Aloha!

Matt



Kids At Work Youth playing on the last day in the annual water fight!



Recognition Sunday for Kids At Work! Pictured left to right are Pastor Laaker, Estrella, Gabriel, Michael, Melissa, Daniel, Lori, Donna, and Jerry. We miss you Matt! Great summer of fun for Kids At Work! Awesome Job Everyone!



Meditations
Confessions
Healing

Wednesday Night
August 21, 2013
7:00 p.m.
Candle light Prayer Service
at Grace Lutheran Church.
People of all faiths are welcome!

Grace Lutheran Church has had the opportunity to be a blessing in many ways. Posted on the bulletin boards are several thank you letters from various organizations expressing what a gift we have given to the community surrounding us. Those organizations are listed as follows:

- * Lutheran Metro Ministries
- * Foodbank for the Heartland
- * Habitat for Humanity - Neighbors South Coalition
- * Lutheran Service Corp
- * Interfaith Health Service - Families in Action
- * Project Hope
- * South Sudan Water Project
- * Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries - Carol Joy Holling Camp
- * Mission Support - through the Synod Office and Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America.



Thank you for being a blessing and reflecting God's love through the ongoing support to the numerous organizations listed above.



Adult Faith Conversations: After worship on Sundays, after coffee fellowship, Pastor will be leading an Adult Faith Conversation utilizing NOOMA short films that explore our world from a perspective of Jesus. Jesus lived with the awareness that God is doing something, right here, right now, and anybody can be a part of it. He encouraged his listeners to search, to question, to wrestle with the implications of what he was saying and doing. God is inviting us to join in the conversation.

Inspirational Quotes from SkyWriting.Net

What we perceive as a failure may simply be our inner being's way of telling us that we are ready to move to a new level of growth. ~ *Anne Wilson Schaef.*

Always show more kindness than you think is necessary because the receiver needs it more than you know. ~ *Arthur Caliendo.*

Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly. ~ *Anonymous.*



"Helping Hands"

Special Pantry Needs for August:
Tomato Products/Soup



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

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

We always need paper or plastic bags.

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

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



Community Baby Shower
Saturday, August 3, 2013
Grace Lutheran Church
1326 South 26th Street
402-341-7730
1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

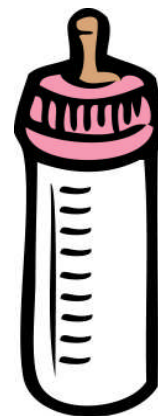


Enjoy games, fellowship, and refreshments!

All items collected (including any items listed above) 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 Vasquez at 402-575-5504, or call the church office at 402-341-7730.





FAMILIES IN ACTION – OMAHA



Virginia McGill, MA
Executive Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

Additional Sewing and Micro-Business Classes Added in HIS/Families in Action

Thanks to the support of the Lozier Foundation, Families in Action and Interfaith Health Service has added an additional micro-business and sewing class to our calendar. Classes will begin next week.

Prior classes were full to capacity and registration for this session is also full.

Classes will focus on sewing basics, such as making skirts, blouses, and clothing repair. Classes will be held each Wednesday morning at the Latina Resource Center, 5211 South 31st Street.

Ramona, our sewing instructor, will again be returning to teach classes, provide technical sewing support, and to live up to her title as “doctor of sewing machines.” Ramona also recently began her own sewing and alteration business in South Omaha as a result of her work with Interfaith Health Service.

We look forward to another successful class of sewing, fellowship and learning together in the weeks ahead!

Virginia and Gema
HIS/Families in Action



Hunger Free Heartland Summer Meals

It's Summer! Kids Eat Free! Los Niños Comen Gratis

Across Nebraska, over 200 local sites offer summer meals through the SFSP. These include schools, faith-based organizations, and community centers. There is no registration or documentation required; children simply need to be present to have a nutritious meal with their peers. In addition to food, many sites provide educational enrichment and recreational activities that help children continue to learn and stay safe and active when school is not in session.

To find locations – Call 2-1-1, text: freefood 877-877
or visit www.hungerfreeheartland.org/summer-meals/
All kids 18 and under eat free!

"A duck was about to cross the road when a chicken saw her and said, "Don't do it, lady – you'll never hear the end of it."

—via Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, Dover, DE

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From JoyfulNoiseletter.com

Special Days in August at Grace Lutheran Church

August 3 - Community Baby Shower.
August 13 - Council Meeting.
August 14 - Photographer's Club.
August 21 - Prayer Service.
August 22- Neighborhood Meeting.
August 27 - Newsletter Assembly.
August 28 - Photographer's Club.

"Dear God. My parents took me to a wedding, and a man and a woman kissed right in church. Is that okay?"

—Sally, age 6

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"Dear God. I think about You sometimes even when I'm not praying."

—Joseph, age 7

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Bible Wordsearch

Seven Bowls of Wrath

Wordsearch 215

Rev.15:4 - 16:5

P P R A G I S E H S A S S T S
N A T I O N S D A E D E E E E
S E I W G B I E D E V M R A T
G L N N A O O N L E P O R T T
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ANGELS CREATURES
BEAST DRESSED
BLOOD GOLDEN
BOWLS HEAVEN
BROKE JUDGED
CHESTS NATIONS
CLEAN PAINFUL
DEAD PEOPLE
EARTH PLAGUES
FILLED POURED
GOD POWER
IMAGE REVEALED
LINEN RIVERS
LIVING SASHES
LORD SHINING
MARK SPRINGS
SORES TEMPLE
SMOKE WATERS
UGLY WORSHIP
VOICE WRATH

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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