

**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. 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 Corp - Jessica Menary**

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

**Beginning  
September 1st  
Worship Time will  
return to 10:30 a.m.**



**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

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### Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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The regular meeting of the Council was held on August 13th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the healing of those close to us; June Hilmer with her recent illness, and Lavonne Moss with her recovery from surgery. We pray for Ron Hansen with his upcoming eye surgery, and for Ralph's niece Crystal and she prepares for surgery after the discovery that she has the cancer gene. We pray for all of those affected by the start of the school year; children, parents, administrators, teachers, etc. We pray for Sarah's friend Tracey Newton with all of her family struggles and for all affected by the mudslides in Colorado and the sinkholes in Kansas & Florida. We lift up Bobbi-Jo and her family as they prepare for the birth of their new daughter.

Pastor led devotions from Joshua 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 1:20. The first speaks about the role of faith in our lives. The second focuses on fulfillment.

Visions for Ministry: The Council continued reading "Can Our Church Live?" by Alice Mann. We began discussing Chapter Three. Be energized! Recapture & embrace. Let's learn to dance together, both inside & outside. Think about a community space becoming a reserved space...and returning to a community place again. Let's take risks, and trust that God will make it happen if it's meant to be. We will continue discussing Chapter Three at our next meeting.

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

Christian Education: VBS was a great success! Thank you to all that were involved.

Evangelism/Outreach: Jessica will be arriving this weekend. We intend to have a 'welcome party' for her with treats after church on Sunday, August 25th.

Finance: Pastor reviewed the financial aspects of the Lutheran Volunteer Corps position. A computer (laptop) was purchased for the church, for all future volunteers.

Property: Sprinkler repair was completed.

Service/Social Ministry: Habitat Dedication will be Sunday, August 18<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. Pastor shared an update on a number of items from the community organizing group.

Support/Stewardship: Intention to sell coupon books for a Sudanese fundraising effort to help fund their Christmas party.

Worship: Survey results are in, we will return to a 10:30 worship time, beginning September 1st.

Unfinished Business: God's Work Our Hands Sunday is September 8th. Ideas? Maybe some service projects in the community...walking and picking up trash?

New Business: Setting the Table Workshop – Hunger ministries at First Lutheran.

Announcements: We will have our next council meeting on September 17th. Pastor will be out of town from August 28th - September 3rd. Pastor Von Seggern will be with us for worship September 1st. A free screening at Aksarben Cinema of "A Place at the Table" will be held on Thursday, September 19th. Please contact your representative and ask them to support comprehensive Immigration Reform with a pathway for citizenship. Vicki will bring treats for our September meeting.



From the Pastor

I was curious about a post on Facebook the other day. It was a link to an article entitled, "Do You Really Need Church?" It was written by Tara Woodard-Lehman. I found it provocative and something I could acknowledge. So, I am sharing it with you. What are your thoughts?

"Not long ago I was having a conversation with a college student. Like many young adults, this guy was a religious "none." He wasn't some sort of jaded post-religious person, but he also wasn't actively trying to find a religious home.

Despite his state of self-described religious none-ness, this student pursued conversations about spiritual things. And, as expressed by many students I talk with, he found my commitment to "traditional religion" quite curious.

"He asked, "I mean, I get why you're into 'being spiritual' and 'helping people' and everything, but why bother with Church? I just don't get that part. Do you really think you need it?"

"He went on to describe how irrelevant the Church was. In his view, all the Church once provided can be found elsewhere in civic life. From community service projects to book clubs; from outreach to the poor to potlucks; from meditation groups to support groups, he described the many other places that provide much of what the Church used to (and occasionally still does) provide.

"I did my best to listen. And you know what I concluded? He was, at least in part, right. If the Church is only what he described (a sort of glorified community center or service provider), it is a wonder anyone shows up.

"I began to seriously ask myself, do I really need Church?

"Why don't I just hit the bagel shop, join another yoga class, buy some more U2 tickets (you know, for a little transcendence) and volunteer at a soup kitchen every once in awhile?

"Why bother with Church at all?

"After giving it much consideration, I've decided that there is at least one very good reason why I need Church: I have a really bad memory.

"It's true. I have a terrible memory. Especially when it comes to remembering who I am as a child of God. Especially when it comes to remembering what God has done, and continues to do, in and through Jesus Christ.

"I forget who I am. I forget who God is. I forget God's Epic Story of Redemption and Liberation and Renewal and Beauty and Hope. I forget. A lot.

"On top of that, there are a gazillion other demands and voices that are vying for my attention all the freaking time.

So I admit it. I get tired. And I get distracted. And more often than not, I forget.

"I need Church, because Church reminds me of everything that's important.

*Continued.....*

“And when I say Church, I'm not talking about a building. I mean the people. I'm referring to the organic, collective, flesh and blood Body of Christ. I'm talking about the beautiful but undeniably imperfect community of people who help me remember who I am, and to Whom I belong, over and over again.

“But don't get me wrong. “I still love piping hot Sunday morning bagels. Preferably with veggie cream cheese. But more than that, I need to be fed by the Bread of Life.

“I still practice yoga and I'm enormously grateful for its presence in my life. But it's no replacement for hearing God's Story, read and proclaimed, week after week.

I absolutely love the adrenaline-pumping-bass-thumping-heart-pulsing intensity of a good rock concert. For me, it really can be a transcendent experience. But I still sing the old hymns of the Church that have sustained followers of Jesus for generations.

“Seriously. Please don't misunderstand me.

“I still think service projects are (usually) good and important. But I find it better to serve others with an eye toward long-term, institutional, sustainable, biblically inspired justice-making and peace-keeping.

“I'll be the first to say I discover God's Spirit working in and through the wonders of creation. But I still need to worship the Creator and be reminded that all good things come from God.

“And while I continue to love a good book club, it's no substitution for a good old fashioned bible study. No fancy gimmicks or cartoony "bible companions" required.

“So, do I need Church? You better believe it. I need Church for many reasons, but mostly because I have a really bad memory. If you do too, maybe I'll see you some Sunday morning. I'll even treat you to a bagel after the service. Just remind me.”

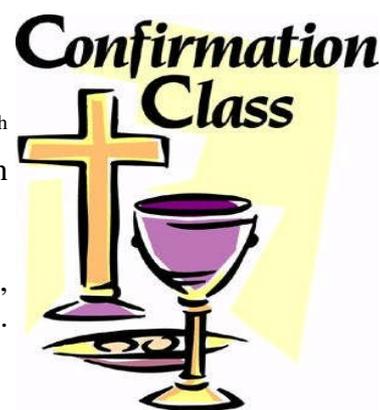
*Pr. Damon Laaker*

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Confirmation – An educational ministry of the Christian Faith

Grace Lutheran offers the opportunity for young people, beginning at 6<sup>th</sup> 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.



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**Inspirational Quotes from SkyWriting.Net**

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

*~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Every evening I turn my troubles over to God --- He is going to be up all night anyway.

*~ Anonymous*



## Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

*“The prayer of a person living right with God  
is something powerful to be reckoned with.”*

*James 5:16b*

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.)
- ◆ Sandy Fitzgerald - Recovery from surgery. (Gloria Moore's daughter.)

### **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

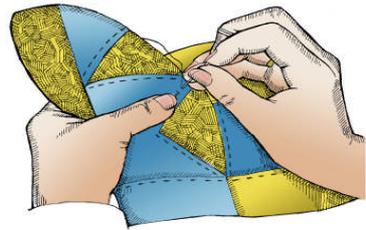
Bishop Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod

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.*





QUILTING GROUP

Welcome Back Quilters!  
Beginning Monday,  
September 9th

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



Coffee Fellowship

**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. No experience is necessary! Join in the great fellowship and conversation.



*Meditations*  
**Confessions**  
*Healing*

Wednesday Night  
September 18, 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.

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

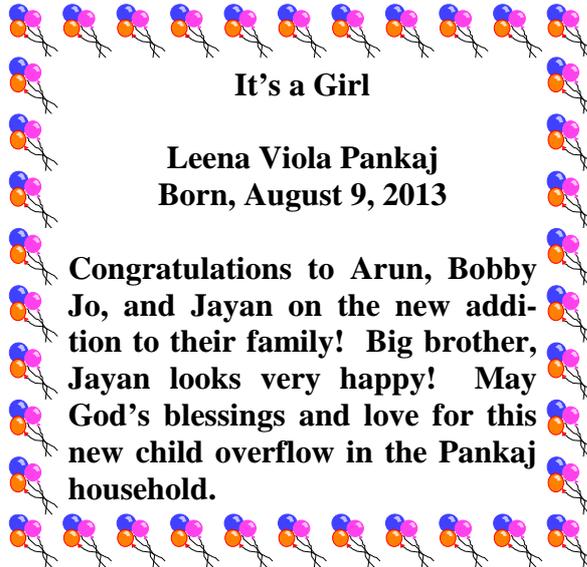
And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

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 the Quilters Quintet, Marilyn, LaVonne, Bob, June, and Eva, your dedication to creating quilts for Lutheran World Relief is truly a reflection of God's love.
- ◆ 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 the Newsletter Assembly crew; Marilyn, Jerry, LaVonne, Bob, June, Gloria, and Eva. The dedication and great conversations during assembly is greatly appreciated!

## News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



**It's a Girl**

**Leena Viola Pankaj  
Born, August 9, 2013**

**Congratulations to Arun, Bobby Jo, and Jayan on the new addition to their family! Big brother, Jayan looks very happy! May God's blessings and love for this new child overflow in the Pankaj household.**



### Inspirational Quotes from SkyWriting.net

We cannot give our children the future, strive though we may to make it secure. But we can give them the present. ~ Kathleen Norris

Hello! I am Jessica Menary the Lutheran Volunteer Corps (LVC) volunteer for Grace Lutheran and Bethel for the 2013-2014 year. I am looking forward to getting to know the congregations, communities, and Omaha.



I am from the small town of Montezuma, Iowa. Growing up I loved camping with my family, and still love the outdoors and spending time with my parents and my older brother and his wife and one year old son. During high school I enjoyed playing sports, participating in speech and drama competitions and plays, and taking dance classes.

This spring I graduated from Grinnell College with a degree in Spanish with a concentration in Latin American Studies. I played softball in college and loved being a part of the team. I studied abroad for a semester in Quito, Ecuador where I lived with a wonderful host family, took classes in Spanish, enjoyed traveling and experiencing the diversity of the culture and environment, and volunteered at a non-profit that worked to bring art education to schools that could not otherwise afford it.

I chose to do LVC because I wanted to serve others, live in a house with an intentional community of people to learn from and grow with, and because I value striving for social justice and sustainability. I am excited to use this year to strengthen my spirituality, offer up my skills, time, and compassion to be used to help others, and to follow where life leads me.

I look forward to meeting you all and working with you through my position as Community Outreach Associate. Please feel free to contact me throughout the year, I am eager to assist, learn, and collaborate. My emails are [outreach@graceluth.com](mailto:outreach@graceluth.com), and [820jessica@gmail.com](mailto:820jessica@gmail.com); my cell phone number is 641-990-5324.

Jessica Menary, Lutheran Volunteer Community Outreach Associate



Co-sponsored by Bread for the World and Whole Foods



**Thursday, September 19th**

**Free Admission!** To the documentary “A Place at the Table”, directed by Kristi Jacobson and Lori Silverbush and starring Oscar-winning actor, Jeff Bridges. Networking from 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.; Movie from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. and a Q & A from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. To reserve your seat please call 402-905-4804 or register online at <https://hfhaplaceatthetable.eventbrite.com>, by September 13, 2013.

Ultimately, A PLACE AT THE TABLE shows us how hunger poses serious economic, social and cultural implications for our nation, and that it could be solved once and for all, if the American public decides—as they have in the past—that making healthy food available and affordable is in the best interest of us all.

# 31st Annual Crop Walk

October 13, 2013

1:30 p.m.

Starting from First Christian Church  
6630 Dodge Street  
Omaha, NE



This year marks the 31<sup>st</sup> Omaha Walk. You can help make a difference in the lives of people locally and worldwide by sponsoring a walker or walking and getting sponsors.

Hungry people in developing countries typically walk as much as six miles a day to get food, water and fuel, and to take their goods to market. We walk in solidarity with their struggle for existence. We walk because we want to end hunger – one step at a time.

Please see Jessica to secure a walker donation envelope and begin securing pledges for the Omaha Walk on Sunday, October 13.



## Savings Sidekick Omaha Coupon Book

The Congregational Council authorized offering the Savings Sidekick Omaha Coupon Book as a fundraiser for the Sudanese Fellowship. This fund raiser will help support the Christmas Celebration of the Sudanese Fellowship.

Coupon books will be available beginning Sunday, September 1. If you would like to help “sell” the books, please speak with Pastor Laaker or Jessica Menary. The books sell for \$20.

Let’s see how many we can sell to help support our Sudanese Fellowship Christmas Celebration.

## God’s Work, Our Hands

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As part of this celebration, congregations are being encouraged to designate a Sunday of service to their community.

Grace’s Congregation Council has set Sunday, September 8, as this day for service. The plan is to spend some time following worship on Sunday, September 8, to walk our neighborhood and pick up trash and litter items. Trash Bags will be provided and directions will be given. So please, as you are able, come prepared to spend 30 minutes, an hour or whatever works for you as we serve our community by removing the litter and trash from the streets.



I think the old saying is “many hands make for light work.” Let’s lend our hands to God’s work.





# "Helping Hands"

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

Special Pantry Needs for September:  
Canned Vegetables/Baked beans

**Below are items clients cannot 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.



## Community Baby Shower, held on Saturday, August 3, 2013

**Grace Lutheran Church was overwhelmed with wonderful donations, good food, fun games, and awesome conversations!**

Above is one of the table center pieces to remind us all of the reflection of God's love shown through all the items that will go to families in need. Pictured to the right are the items that were donated to Project Hope.



Pictured to the left are some of the ladies who attended this time of fun! All in attendance had a wonderful time. Some were reminded of nursery rhymes long forgotten and others learned of some never known before! Thank you Lori for all the dedication to getting this project completed!

**Omaha Together One Community (OTOC)**

**Why Nebraska Needs Immigration Reform  
Tuesday, September 3 at 7:00 p.m.**

College of St. Mary in Gross Auditorium  
(72nd & Mercy Road)

Panel discussion with faith and business leaders, Dreamers and others about how common-sense immigration laws will create a strong future for Nebraska's families, economy, and communities and what would help bring our immigration system up to date.

**Prayer Vigil for Immigration Reform  
Wednesday, September 4 from 6 - 6:30 p.m.**

An interfaith vigil to pray with clergy, lay leaders, and Dreamers who are working to keep Nebraska families together. Witness to Congress that we want to update our antiquated immigration laws. (Meet at the SE corner of 24th and L Street - by the "Diversity Tree" Sculpture in front of Walgreen's)

**Special Days in September at  
Grace Lutheran Church**

- September 2 - Labor Day.
- September 8 - ELCA Service Day.
- September 11 - Photographer's Club.
- September 17 - Council Meeting.
- September 18 - Prayer Service.
- September 19- Neighborhood Meeting.
- September 24 - Newsletter Assembly.
- September 25 - Photographer's Club.

**Town Hall Meeting with  
Rep. Lee Terry  
Wednesday, September 4 at 7:00 p.m.**

Come to Rep. Lee Terry's Town Hall Meeting at South High School where you can ask him questions about immigration reform and other topics.

**Bible Wordsearch**

Wordsearch 216

Rev.16:6-16

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

**Armageddon**

- AGONY
- ANGEL
- BEAST
- BLOOD
- CURSED
- FALSE
- GNAWED
- HEAVEN
- HEBREW
- LORD
- PAINS
- POWER
- REPENT
- SAINTS
- SIGNS
- THIEF
- TRUE
- SORES
- ALMIGHTY
- BLESSED
- CLOTHES
- DEMONS
- DRAGON
- EXPOSED
- GLORIFY
- KINGDOM
- PLAGUES
- PLUNGED
- POURED
- PROPHETS
- REFUSED
- SCORCH
- SPIRITS
- THRONE
- TONGUES
- WORLD

DARKNESS

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Psm.51

"Technology is amazing. When I first started driving it took forever to pump \$20 worth of gas; now it's almost instant."

—Matt Gubser

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