

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

402-341-7730

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

REGULAR SUNDAY EVENTS  
9:30 a.m. Christian Education  
11:00 a.m. Worship Service

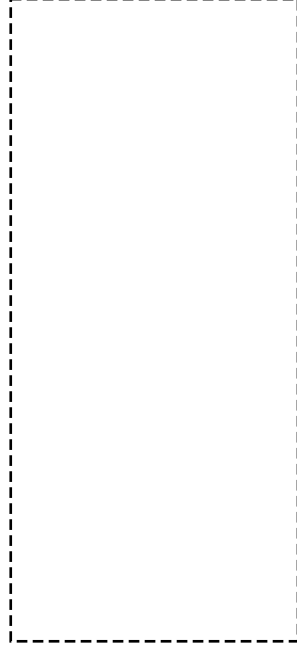
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez  
Families In Action - Virginia McGill  
Lutheran Volunteer Corp - Malachi Black

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# THE GRACE MESSENGER



1889 - 2014

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



**2014 Council Members**

Vicki Cox	Janet Hula
Andrew Edwards	Eva Martin
Sarah Emery	Loren Moyer
Arlone Farber	Charles Tuw
June Hilmer	Pastor Laaker
*****	

Officers Serving the Congregation:  
Financial: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on November 11th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us; for Ken Hilmer, Joe & Barb Narducci as they struggle with health problems, for Norma & Teresa Courtney as they continue their health battles, for Dotti Hula as she continues her rehabilitation, and for Ula as she continues her cancer treatments. We praise God and rejoice for the healing and improvement for Roseanne Emery.

Vicki led devotions from Jeremiah 18:14-15 and Matthew 23:37. The first speaks to us about taking time to acknowledge blessings; not taking things for granted. The second reminds us that God is waiting for us, even though we push away. There is comfort in God; stay out of danger, away from our own ideas and intentions!

Visions for Ministry: The Council continued discussing The Future Starts Now. We spoke about failure = learning. Be willing to get out there and DO it. It may not be easy, but we need to follow Jesus openly. Be ok with it! He's already working here...show me and I'll believe, vs. believe me, and I'll show you. Fond feelings about the turtle racing story from the book - people looking to a future!! For next meeting, bring up another thing that influenced you, and one thing that you took away.

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

Christian Education: 7/8 grade confirmation with other groups and Malachi. Also working on Sudanese teachings with high school age folks.

Evangelism/Outreach: Halloween party was a great time! Approx 100-150 people attended! Thanks to all who volunteered.

Finance: No new report.

*Continued...*

Property: Looked at one new bid on front door work, 2 toilets replaced, 1 tree trimmed (paid for by the Endowment fund), info discussed on furnace replacement vs. updating.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

Support/Stewardship: Cards will go out last of November, Dedication for planned gifts on December 7.

Worship: Open invitation to Hymn Selection meetings, four times per year. Next meeting on January 27. Great job with the new acolytes! More volunteers to be ushers are needed.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: Time for our annual nominating committee; Vicki, June, & Sarah will be leaving council. Vicki, Janet, and someone from the congregation will begin the nominating process.

Announcements: No new report. June will bring treats for our December meeting.



**Christmas Eve Service Schedules**



Grace Lutheran Church  
Christmas Eve Service  
4:30 p.m.

St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
2315 I Street  
Christmas Eve Service  
6:30 p.m.



Two convenient times and locations to Joyfully Celebrate the wonders of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ in the season of Christmas with friends, family, and loved ones!





"Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." As a child, this was our closing prayer at mealtime. I remember it well and often as I think of all the ways that God has surrounded me with goodness and grace.

Our celebration of Thanksgiving is here. We have much to be thankful for personally and as community. We are able to praise God and extend love and care through actions of generosity.

Our Stewardship Emphasis, "Living Generously," has given us a glimpse into the life a family and those this family has blessed.

Our third visit had us watching Frank's journey toward understanding generous living. He was affected by his dream and determined to be more generous. An interaction with Re led Frank to the soup kitchen, and Frank is encouraged to do more than pull out his checkbook. He found himself working in the kitchen. Serving stretches Frank, and he found that he has much to learn about helping people.

The soup kitchen gives Frank a taste of generous living and Re imparts wisdom that by becoming poor we are following Christ's example. Jesus calls us to become poor and serve so that we can show them God's love. And the question we are left with is, "Are you serving yourself, or are you serving others?"

In our fourth visit, we will see that all of the Donovan family has gotten involved in serving at the soup kitchen, and Frank is different. He is reexamining his financial strategies and making changes, but Frank still believes he is in control of developing a safe future for his family. Then he gets the phone call. Cassie, Frank's wife, was mugged. The doctor in the hospital tells Frank that she is in a coma to stop her brain from bleeding. There is nothing Frank can do.

Frank joins Re at the top of the hospital where Re shares about his wife's battle with cancer. He shares the word the Lord gave him during that time, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe. The rich man's wealth is his strong city..." Cancer taught Re that God is the real Strong Tower, not anything that could be built with human hands. Re continues by saying worldly security is fleeting. To love is to be vulnerable, but God's faithfulness is forever. Running to the name of the Lord is trusting in Him. And the questions we are left with are, "Where do you run in the day of trouble? Are you investing in the temporary or the eternal?"

*Continued.....*

In our fifth and final visit, we will see a television depicting news of the financial crisis, but Cassie is home from the hospital. Great things are happening at the soup kitchen. A construction company is there promising to fix the old building and to hire the soup kitchen's clients to assist with the repairs. Re suspects Frank is involved in their promises, but Frank is evasive to Re's questions. Later, Frank tells Cassie that her accident showed him that he couldn't protect his family from hardship. He tells her that he wants to take risks and trust God. They agree to an entire shift towards a lifestyle of living generously. The whole Donovan family - Frank, Cassie & their 2 children - meets with the financial advisor to tell him they want to make their money more accessible so they can be more generous.

Later, Re talks about how God wants us to take risks. In the story of the talents, God only rebukes the servant that buried his talent. Re quotes Matthew Henry, who said, "Our present time is seedtime, in the other world we shall reap as we sow now." Our story concludes with Re joyfully throwing seed into the air. The questions we are left with are, "What are you doing with the resources of time, treasure, and talent that God has given you? Are you living generously?"

I pray that we might offer prayers of thanks and orient our lives in such a way that living generously becomes more than words on a page, it becomes our way of life.

Pastor Laaker



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### ***Christmas Mitten Tree***

It is that special time of year! The Christmas Mitten Tree will be displayed in the upper fellowship hall during the month of December.

As in past years, during the sales of this Christmas Season, consider adding a pair of mittens, gloves, scarf or any additional warm apparel to place on the mitten tree. Your gift will go to benefit shelters and pantries in the area.





Yet 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:

**Individuals listed below have ongoing health issues and concerns:**

Andrew Edwards  
Ken Hilmer  
Sharon Irwin  
LaVonne Moss  
Joe Narducci  
Cheryl Powley  
Lori Vasquez



James Harrahill  
David Hufford  
Carolyn Matson  
Robert Moss  
Don Olson  
Margie Sutej  
Urbano Vasquez



Norma Courtney (Arlone Farber's Mom.)  
Bob Hargis (Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer's son-in-law.)  
Christian Barajas (Samantha Trejo, Angela & Alex Everitt's brother.)  
Pam Reents (Close friend to many!)  
Roseanna Emery (Tom Emery's Mom.)  
Gema Wolde (Interfaith/Families in Action and friend to many!)

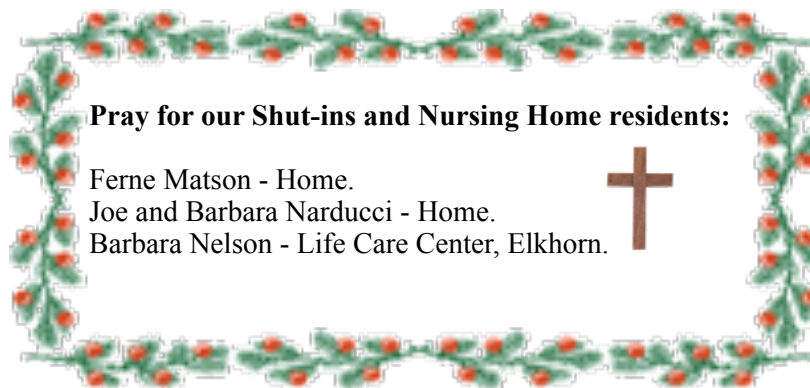
**Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Lutheran Church.**

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 Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

Pray for the Sudanese community in general. David Nange, John Boato and Charles Tuv are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

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



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

Ferne Matson - Home.  
Joe and Barbara Narducci - Home.  
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn.



Grace Lutheran's dedicated quilters; Marilyn, LaVonne, June, Eva, and sometimes even Bob! were able to make 36 quilts in the past 12 months that were mailed to the Lutheran World Relief warehouse located in Minneapolis.



Quilts are mailed once a year in the Ingathering Effort to give a little warmth and to reflect God's Love to people around the world in need.



**Grace Quilters for Lutheran World Relief**

Monday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Join a lively group of people and assemble amazing tie quilts for Lutheran World Relief organization. These quilts are delivered around the world to areas most in need of a little comfort. Please feel free to stop by check out the activity. Coffee break and joke time is 10:00 a.m.; another opportunity in fellowship with one another. No experience is necessary!



**Order Your Poinsettias**  
**Cost is \$6.50**

A Sign-Up Sheet has been posted on the Bulletin Board, please order before December 10th

Be sure to designate whether you would like a red or white plant and whether you plan to take your flowers home after the Christmas holiday or leave them at the church to be shared with shut-ins. For your convenience, you can call the church office at 402-341-7730 to place a poinsettia order.



**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**Annual Christmas Luncheon at**  
**Piccolo Pete's Restaurant**  
**2202 South 20th Street**  
**Tuesday, December 16, 2014**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
**Everyone is Welcome!**

Please plan to attend in the celebration and fellowship time. A Sign-Up Sheet has been posted on the bulletin board, or you can call the church office, 402-341-7730, with your planned reservation.



**Prayer Service**  
**Wednesday**  
**December 17, 2014**  
**7:00 p.m.**

An inspiring and quiet experience in meditation, light music, and a deeper connection within God's presence, peace, and love.

**Confirmation Class**



There will be no Confirmation Classes during the month of December. Classes will begin again in January, 2015 at Shepherd of the Hills. Additional information will be available in the January Newsletter.

Siena/Francis House will benefit from four Omaha seafood restaurants in the Omaha metro area on Tuesday, December 2nd. The four restaurants participating are Shuck's Fish House & Oyster Bars located at 119th & Pacific, 168th & Center, and at 19th & Leavenworth Street. The fourth participant is Bailey's Breakfast & Lunch located at 120th & Pacific Street. Please consider stopping by one of these four locations on December 2nd for a bite to eat and support the Siena/Francis House at the same time! If you have any questions, please call the Siena/Francis House at 402-341-1821.



Dear Friends and Family,

I want to thank you all for the prayers that have been offered on my behalf during these last few months. I am please to tell you that the radiation treatments are over. The prognosis is good. If I continue with the oncology advice for the next five years and take the medicine, my chance of beating cancer is about 98%.



As Thanksgiving arrives this year, I am reflecting on the gift of your friendship and it's importance in my life. I am so humbled by your words and acts of kindness. I know that without them, this journey would have been unbearable. Thanks for upholding me and my family with your love.

With Love,  
Pam Reents

We have begun to engage the Living Generously series on Sunday mornings. Brief but powerful videos that give us insights and reason to pause and contemplate our own life choices. We are reminded that what we do shows our love and shows who and what we love. "The gift reveals the giver."



The hustle of the upcoming holiday adds more on our already stuffed plates of responsibilities. We can lose ourselves in the hectic commotion that often envelopes our lives. The challenge isn't to necessarily give more or do more, but to maintain loving generosity. Opportunities will always present themselves. We don't have to go out of our way, or strive to accomplish great feats. We simply must be open, ready and willing to give of ourselves when chances arise. Loving generosity means sacrificial giving. Giving not for the reward it brings us, but giving when we could be potentially losing out. Willingly and joyously.

The spirit of generosity and lovingness I have experienced at Grace inspires me to be more generous of my time, talents, and treasures toward my housemates, and within the communities I am a part of and represent. Generosity does have its reward as well. The feeling of being a part of something bigger than myself is immeasurable in value. Seeing smiles, feeling warmth and appreciation, and knowing people are being helped create a feeling greater than being nestled next to a fireplace with a blanket and hot chocolate, coffee, or tea.

How do we give emotionally and relationally? If the gift reveals the giver, then the very emotions and relationships we nurture reveal aspects of who we are. Bonding through relationships and allowing our emotions to be sincerely felt and experienced creates one of the most powerful life experiences for both the giver and receiver. It's why just smiling and greeting a person warmly and honestly can be the one thing that illuminates a person's day. Or why a cruel word spoken with malicious intent can decimate a person's feeling of self worth.

Every moment is an opportunity that reveals who we are, what we stand for, and what we have to give. Give generously, because giving is living in action. When we give the best of our time, energy, and abilities, we live best.

Malachi Black  
Community Outreach Associate  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Lutheran Volunteer Corps  
outreach@graceluth.com



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 the plants in the entry way, they continue to thrive and look welcoming.
- Thank you to the Quilting crew; Marilyn, LaVonne, June, Eva, and sometimes Bob, for the weekly dedication and effort in creating quilts for the Lutheran World Relief Organization.
- Thank you to the ESL tutors; Malachi Black, Vicki Cox, Arlone Farber, Mary Laaker, and Amanda Vazquez, for making connections with the students willing to learn and form friendships.
- Thank you to Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer, Greg and Janet Hula, and Christi Edwards; who pick up altar flowers every Sunday morning.
- Thank you to Ron Adrian and Loren Moyer for their recent time and dedication to the installation of the new toilets in the restrooms!
- Thank you Donna, Vicki, Greg, and Janet for responding to the request for additional acolytes! You are all doing a great job!
- Thank you to the Newsletter Assembly crew; Marilyn, Jerry, LaVonne, Bob, Gloria, and June, it is always a treat to listen and join in the lively conversations!
- Thank you to Ron and Donna Adrian and Brenda Spahr who take care of the altar, and prepare the communion table.
- Thank you Alma for her dedication, efforts, and responsibility of cleaning this busy building, it looks fantastic!





Virginia McGill, MA  
Executive Director

www.familiesinactionomaha.org



Gema C. Wolde  
Community Health Worker  
Se habla español.

Families in Action Mobile Health and Wellness Clinic A Community-wide Success

On behalf of Families in Action, we would like to thank all of our partners and families in the community for helping make our most recent health and wellness clinic a rousing success (please see photo below). During the month of November, Families in Action and our partners offered flu shots, blood pressure screenings, blood sugar screenings, cholesterol screenings, and height and weight assessments, combined with nutritional education, Promotora education and children's activities to hundreds of families in South Omaha.

A special thanks to Nebraska Methodist College for providing wonderful nursing students and faculty members, to Carissa who worked closely with us in the planning phases, and to our amazing college student volunteers from across the city, especially Tyler, Emily, Annie and Erin for their work with interpreting, assessments and education.

We are also deeply grateful to the many families who gave their time and input on our needs assessments. We are committed to responding to their requests for increased programming and education in the future. In the short-term, we will be returning on a regular basis to provide follow-up screenings and education and look forward to building additional programs and partnerships as we move forward.

Thanks again to all of our families, volunteers and staff for their time and enthusiasm in making our programs possible.

Gracias,  
Virginia, Gema and Kaela



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Detectors supplied by the First Responders Critical Support Foundation.



**Lutheran South Pantry**  
**4401 South 23rd Street**  
**402-502-7070**

Items that clients cannot purchase with their food stamps 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 wipers, and Diapers, especially sizes 4, 5, 6 and pull-ups.

**We always need paper or plastic bags.**

**Buy Your 2015 God's Creation Calendar!**

The Calendars Are Here! Calendars are open for everyone, if you would like to purchase a copy, please look for Donna or Brenda on Sunday mornings or call the church office at 402-341-7730.



Calendars include beautiful monthly scenic photography enhanced with inspiring Scriptures from the Holy Bible. High-quality, heavy-weight stock with gloss coated photo pages and ample space to write appointments and family events.

Same Great Price ~ Only \$5.00

December 2014



- 7 - Mary Laaker
- 14 - Malachi Black
- 21 - Brenda Spahr
- 24 - Greg Hula
- 28 - Arlone Farber
- Jan. 4 - Mary Laaker

*December Alcolytes*

- 7 - Greg & Janet Hula
- 14 - Vicki Cox
- 21 - Donna Adrian
- 24 - Andrea & Brenda Spahr
- 28 - Greg Hula
- Jan. 4 - Janet Hula & Vicki Cox



- 1 - Nowa Keita
- 3 - Barb Nelson
- 9 - Sharon Irwin
- 15 - Izabella Perales
- 16 - Frankie Costanzo Jr.
- 17 - Bob Moss
- 18 - Marilyn Van Ormer
- 19 - Lee Costanzo
- 22 - Sherif Lado
- 24 - Lola Harsin
- 31 - Joseph Narducci

Did we miss your birthday?  
Please contact the church office and let us know!

Ushers & Greeters



December Ushers

- Vicki Cox
- Malachi Black
- Andrew Edwards

December Greeters

- 7 - Loren and Marsha Moyer
- 14 - Sarah Emery and Mary Laaker
- 21 - Gloria Moore and June Hilmer
- 24 - Ron and Donna Adrian
- 28 - Bob and LaVonne Moss
- Jan. 4 - Brenda and Andrea Spahr



Responsibility List



Altar Flowers

- 7 - Bob and LaVonne Moss, in honor of their 66th Wedding Anniversary.
- 14 - Andrew, Christi, Clay Edwards and Tracy Petrini, in loving memory of their parents, Albion and Charlotte Edwards.
- 21 - OPEN.
- 28 - Marilyn and Jerry Van Ormer and Charlotte Palczynski, in loving memory of Kirk Petersen.
- Jan. 4 - OPEN.

Flower Pick-Up for December - Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer

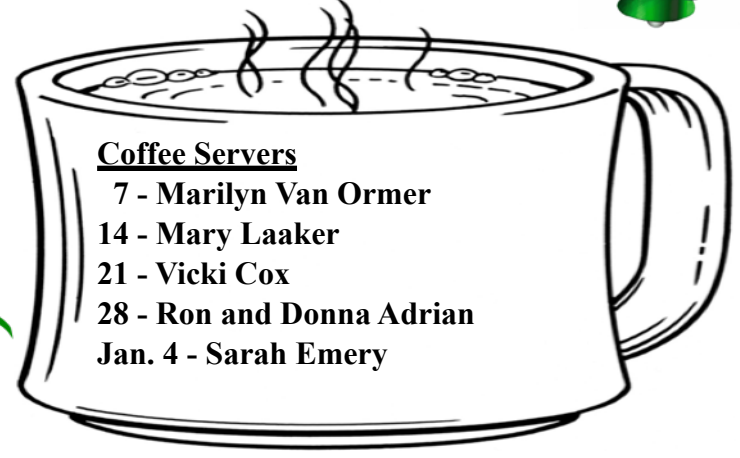
Backpack Program

- 7 - OPEN.
- 14 - Jerry Van Ormer, in honor of his wife, Marilyn's birthday.
- 21 - Brenda and Andrea Spahr, Merry Christmas!
- 28 - Brenda and Andrea Spahr, God's Blessings for 2015.
- Jan. 4 - OPEN.



Coffee Servers

- 7 - Marilyn Van Ormer
- 14 - Mary Laaker
- 21 - Vicki Cox
- 28 - Ron and Donna Adrian
- Jan. 4 - Sarah Emery





The Usher Volunteer Group is in need of additional people to help participate during Sunday worship service. If you have any questions regarding this opportunity, please speak with Andrew Edwards. Thank you!



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### God's kids say & do the funniest things

A 5-year-old began raising questions about dying and heaven. One day, he asked his grandmother, "Grandma, when will you go to heaven?"

His grandmother exclaimed, "When my invitation from God comes, I'll go then."

The boy exclaimed, "When it comes, Grandma, don't you dare open it. Send it right back. I want you to stay with me forever."

—Columnist Smiley Anders  
Baton Rouge (LA) Advocate via Jeff Totten

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A Sunday School teacher smiled at her primary class and said, "All right children, all those who want to go to heaven, raise your hands."

Everyone responded except one little boy. "What's the matter, Shawn? Don't you want to go to heaven?" the teacher asked.

"I can't, teacher. My Mom said that I had to come straight home."

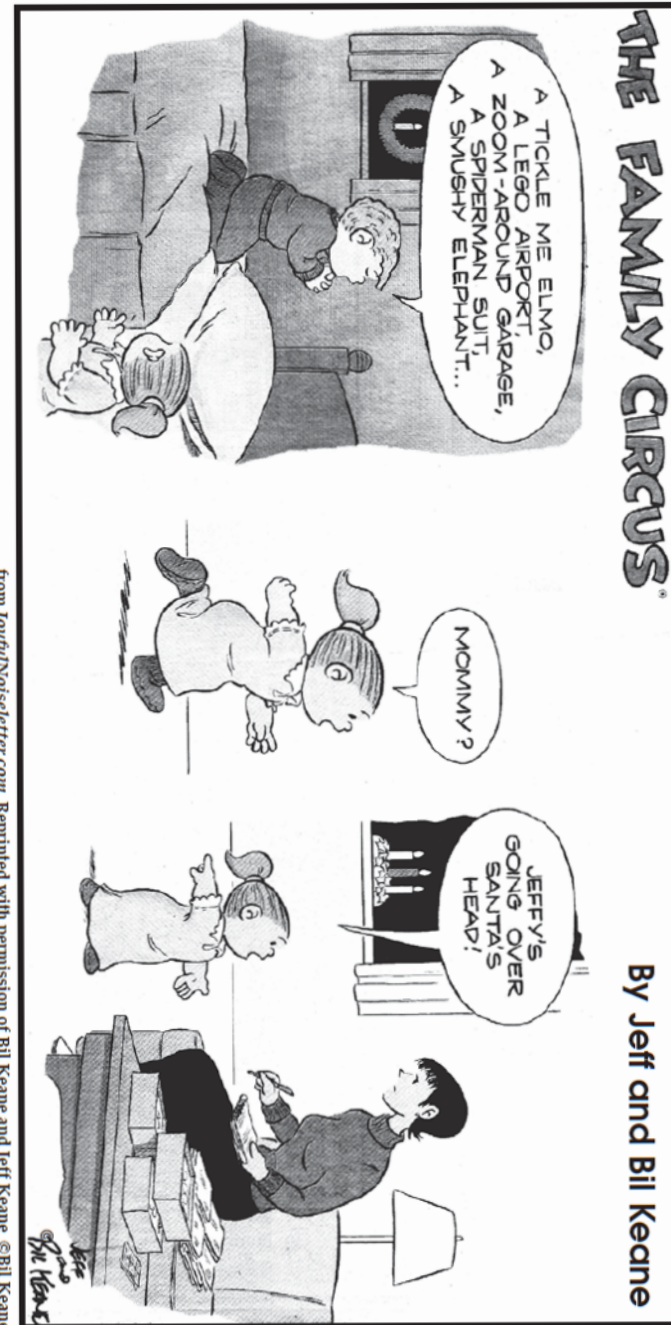
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"The leader of our Wednesday morning Bible Study group noticed that one woman's Bible was getting worn and mentioned that the more ragged one's Bible is, especially when it is all marked up, it's a sign to others that you read your Bible.

Another member of the group added: "That's why you always buy a Bible from the used bookstore."

—via Rev. Barbara Bartholomew  
Grace Lutheran Church, Austintown, OH

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## 'God with us'

*It's Christmas and God's love is real,  
 It's Christmas and God's love is here,  
 It's Christmas and Christ has come  
 that the world may know, the love of the Son!  
 For the message of Christmas  
 is the love of Christ,  
 who came into this world  
 to light up our life.  
 And His spirit brings peace,  
 His spirit brings joy,  
 His spirit brings the love of the  
 Father into this world.  
 So this Christmas may you receive God's peace,  
 This Christmas receive God's joy,  
 This Christmas receive the love of Jesus,  
 Emmanuel. God with us!*

*-Linda Yack, Bordentown, NJ  
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## Christmas Bells

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
 Their old, familiar carols play,  
 And wild and sweet  
 The words repeat  
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
 The belfries of all Christendom  
 Had rolled along  
 The unbroken song  
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its wy  
 The world revolved from night to day,  
 A voice, a chime,  
 A chant sublime  
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
 The cannon thundered in the South,  
 And with the sound  
 The Carols drowned  
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
 "There is no peace on earth," I said;  
 "For hate is strong,  
 And mocks the song  
 Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
 "God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
 The Wrong shall fail,  
 The Right prevail,  
 With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow  
 Skywriting.net



## Christmas Humor

Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft of Dover, DE, passed on these "slips of the ear" (a record of persons mishearing the words of songs) from Richard Lederer's book, *Have Yourself a Punny Little Christmas*:

- "We three kings of porridge and tar."
- "He's making a list of chicken and rice."
- "Noel, Noel. Barney's the king of Israel."
- "Bells on bobtail ring, making spareribs bright."
- "O atom bomb, O atom bomb."
- "On a one horse, soap, and sleigh."
- "With the jelly toast proclaim."
- "Frosty the Snowman is a ferret elf, I say."
- "In the meadow we can build a snowman."
- "Then pretend that he is sparse and brown."
- "Get dressed, you married gentlemen, get huffing you this May."



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While at the mall at Christmas time, a four-year-old boy named Spencer saw kids lined up to see Santa Claus. Having been taught as a toddler that Christmas is the holiday that Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, he asked his Mom, "Where's the line to see Jesus?"

That comment inspired his Grandfather to compose a song titled "Where's The Line To See Jesus?" It can be found on YouTube with the boy's cousin, Becky Kelley, singing it, including the line, "Santa Claus gave me presents, but Christ gave his life for me."

—via Peter Dring Land O Lakes, WI  
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## Christmas Search



- |            |           |            |          |
|------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| Angels     | Fruitcake | Nativity   | Snowman  |
| Candy cane | Gifts     | Noel       | Star     |
| Chestnuts  | Glitter   | Ornaments  | Stocking |
| Children   | Jesus     | Peppermint | Tree     |
| Cookies    | Jingle    | Reindeer   | Wisemen  |
| December   | Joseph    | Shepherds  |          |
| Decorate   | Manger    | Sleigh     |          |
| Frosty     | Mary      | Snow       |          |

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