

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

Return Service Requested
Dated Material

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
Intern - Vicar Angela Khabeb
Editor/Church Secretary – Pam Reents
Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Cody Talarico
Sexton - Brian Sutej
Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill

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

February 2009



THE GRACE MESSENGER

2009 Council Members



Ron Adrian
Arlone Farber
Ernest Olson

Vicki Cox
June Hilmer
Pastor Laaker

Andrew Edwards
Gloria Moore

Sarah Emery
David Nange

Council Reports

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Margie Sutej

Special Thanks to the outgoing 2008 Council members, David Hufford, Greg Hula and Brenda Spahr for their ministry to Grace Church. Thank you for your service.

The regular meeting of the Council was held January 13th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing; Bobby Heesacker, Robert Lund, Mary and Brianna Freed; care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal; we pray for Teri Briley, Sandy Fitzgerald, Ambrose Lado that they stay strong during their battle with cancer; we pray for all who have lost loved ones and that they remain steadfast in hope; we pray for an end to all of the unrest and conflict in the world, especially between Israel and Palestine; we pray for those who are considering to serve on Council. Pastor led devotions from Psalm 81:11-12 and Luke 15:7, the Psalm reminds us that not all listen to God's word therefore, God gives us free-will. Luke tells us that there will be more glory in heaven in the one seeking repentance than the 99 who do not need repentance.

Visions for Ministry: The Council read excerpts of "When God Speaks Through Change" by Craig A. Satterlee.

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

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: No new report.

Finance: Council went over the 2009 Mission Plan (Budget).

Property: Grace Lutheran is looking for help with snow removal; those interested please see Pastor Laaker.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

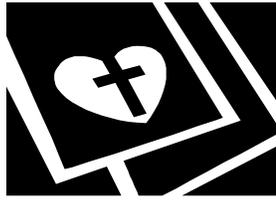
Support/Stewardship: A Thank You to David Hufford for reading the Stewardship Moment this month during Worship Service on January 11th.

Worship: No new report.

Unfinished Business: The Nominating Committee submitted the following for consideration; Vicki Cox and Gloria Moore for the 2 two year terms and Arlone Farber, Andrew Edwards and Ernie Olson for the 3 new three year terms. David Hufford has been nominated to serve on the Endowment Board.

New Business: Council received sad news with the resignation letter of Pam Reents, who has been our faithful secretary for the past nine and a half years. A Cake reception will be held on Sunday, February 1st for all to share their good wishes to Pam. An Audit Committee will need to meet in the next week to go over figures. Donna Adrian will chair and will need two additional people to form the committee. Ron Adrian will call Gloria Moore, Mickey Anderson and Arlone Farber to set up a meeting. Council will need to coordinate the Pot Luck Luncheon following services on the 25th. Pastor shared thank-you notes from Cody Talarico and Pam Reents for Christmas gifts. Pastor expressed appreciation to David Hufford, Greg Hula and Brenda Spahr for serving on the Council. Council dinner at Malara's will be on Monday, January 26, 2009 at 6:00 p.m.

Announcements: Sarah will bring treats for our February meeting.



FROM THE PASTOR

I ran across the following piece on relationships. It seems appropriate as we say farewell to Pam. I trust that, by now, you have heard that Pam Reents has submitted her resignation effective at the end of January. Pam began with us in September 1999. Take a good look at the Ten Commandments of Human Relations.

1. Speak to people. There is nothing as nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
2. Smile at people. It takes seventy-two muscles to frown, only fourteen to smile.
3. Call people by name. Music to anyone's ears is the sound of his/her own name.
4. Be friendly and helpful.
5. Be cordial. Speak and act as if everything you do is genuinely a pleasure, and if it isn't, learn to make it so.
6. Be genuinely interested in people. You can like almost everybody if you try.
7. Be generous with praise, cautious with criticism.
8. Be considerate with the feelings of others. There are usually three sides to a controversy: yours, the other fellow's, and the right one.
9. Be alert to serve. What counts most in life is what we do for others.
10. Add to this a good sense of humor, a big dose of patience, and a dash of humility, and you will be rewarded manifold through life.

As I think back on the last 9+ years that Pam has spent serving at Grace, I think Pam must have had these particular commandments tucked away in her drawer somewhere. Well, probably not, but her practice of them was a tremendous gift to all who made contact with the church office. I truly appreciated her efforts to engage people in friendly conversation and treat them as her number one point of attention.

I hope you will come out on Sunday, February 1, following worship to say farewell to Pam. The council is hosting a reception in her honor.

While it is always sad to lose good help, Pam has indicated that she still lives in the neighborhood and that she will keep many of you in her circle of friends. I trust we will bump into Pam and have plenty of opportunity to reconnect in the days ahead.

Please join me in wishing her all the best of God's richest blessings! May we take to heart these Ten Commandments of Human Relations and build all of our relationships on their wisdom.

Pastor Laaker

There are many things which a person can do alone, but being a Christian is not one of them. As the Christian life is, above all things, a state of union with Christ, and of union of his followers with one another, love of the brethren is inseparable from love of God. Resentment toward any human being cannot exist in the same heart with love to God. The personal relationship to Christ can only be realized when one has "come to himself" as a member of His Body, the Christian fellowship.

William T. Ham, (<http://dailychristianquote.com>)



The Vicar's Voice

Lift Every Voice And Sing

February is African American History Month. And as this important time of the year approaches, I am mindful of the song, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. *Lift Every Voice and Sing* is one of my favorite hymns. I remember learning it in the second grade at Mount View Elementary School in Omaha, Nebraska. Then, back in the late 1970=s, *Lift Every Voice and Sing* was introduced to me as the Negro National Anthem. Even as a child, I realized that the words of this song spoke to generational scars that ran deep in the African American community. In the poetry of its verses, I feel a God who is very present in the joys as well as the sorrows of God=s people. In this song, I also encounter a God who is aware of spiritual, physical, and generational hurts. Imbedded in these words is a God who is embodied in and with us through our shouts of celebrating and our cries for justice. I could go on describing this anthem at length. But its eloquence really does stand alone.

Lift Every Voice And Sing

By James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

1. Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring, ring with the harmonies of liberty. Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies, let it resound loud as the rolling sea. Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us; sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us; facing the rising sun of our new day begun, let us march on till victory is won.

2. Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod, felt in the days when hope unborn had died. Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears have been watered; we have come treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered, Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

3. God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who hast brought us thus far on the way; Thou who hast by thy might led us into the light, keep us forever in the path we pray. Lest our feet stray from the places, our God where we met thee; lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee; Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand, true to our God, true to our native land.

Most of us have heard this song many times before. In the Lutheran Book of Worship, this hymn is listed under celebration and jubilation. In the African American Lutheran Hymnal, *This Far by Faith*, it is listed under praise and thanksgiving. In the African American Hymnal of the Catholic Church, *Lead Me Guide Me*, it is listed under the heading Asocial concern@. It is obvious to me that this anthem is all three.

In the first verse, I see the forgotten ones crying out for freedom and liberty. I can see a people who are confident that, through their raised voices, heaven will hear and echo the freedom cry of God's people. I see people that have been mistreated and oppressed, but find a reason to rejoice and petition their God for justice. And these bodies, hold tightly to the hope that sustains them as they look to a brighter day in the future for the next generations.

In the second verse, James Weldon Johnson presents the harsh reality of marginalized people. He speaks of weathered generations, tired souls, and crying hearts. These are a people who are mindful of the pain and tears of the past yet stand on the strength and faith that are born in adversity. The words remind me of the interconnectedness that our lives have with all of humanity.

In the third and final verse, I see people who are unafraid to cry out to God. I see weary, tearful people who are willing to defy a bleak past by looking towards a brighter future. I see those who desire spiritual fulfillment and seek God's guidance as they walk life's paths. I see protected people who find shelter from the scorching heat of oppression and injustice under the mighty, nurturing hand of God. I see faithful people that are committed to God and to their community. I see members who are a part of the Body of Christ.

This hymn, Lift Every Voice and Sing, has a powerful and timeless, universal message that speaks to the realities of marginalized people both historically and at present. The words live on in our joys and sorrows and this song reminds us that it is possible to rejoice even with a broken heart. This song speaks to the embodiment of not only suffering and pain, but also hope and freedom. I pray that the words of this song also touch you deeply and that God speaks to you through God's amazing promise of everlasting presence.

Vicar Angela Khabeb



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

Games, Crafts, and Fun Geared for Elementary Kids!

Free!

Director, Brenda Spahr

Sponsoring flowers for Sunday morning worship is a good way to honor special events in your life. The 2009 Flower Chart is posted outside the church office. There are still opportunities to sign up.

• F L O W E R C H A R T •



**W/ELCA Board Meeting
&
W/ELCA Circle Meeting**

February 17th 1:00 p.m.

Hostess and bible Study Leader: LaVonne Moss



*Women of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*



Stewardship Minute

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

*"Effective Stewardship" by Kenneth L. Williams.
Month 6*

"Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil — this is the gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19).

Don't you just love gifts? There is great satisfaction both in getting gifts and in giving them. Since we are created in the image of God, it stands to reason that He also must take great delight in giving and receiving gifts.

All that we have comes from His hand, but in particular, Solomon indicated that money and riches and the ability to enjoy them are gifts from God. In other words, God gives us that which is rightfully His, and then He allows us the enjoyment of wealth and money. As we enjoy what He has entrusted to us, no doubt He takes great pleasure in our enjoyment if our actions are in conformity to His Word and His will.

How can we be sure that our enjoyment of money and wealth is according to God's plan? The Bible contains a great deal of specific instruction as to how we are to use money, but this guiding principle is to motivate our entire lives, including the use and enjoyment of wealth: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

There's nothing wrong with money. There's nothing wrong with enjoying the things that money can buy. Solomon was correct when he said that both are gifts from God. The key is to use money in such a way that our enjoyment will bring glory to God. One of the primary ways to do that is to give to the Lord and His work here at Grace Lutheran Church.

During the past few months, have you kept God's glory as the number one priority in your use of money? Or have other things taken the place of your giving to God?

February 2009 Stewardship Principle

Money is one of God's gifts to people.

"Likewise all to whom God gives wealth and possessions and whom he enables to enjoy them, and to accept their lot and find enjoyment in their toil — this is the gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19).



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*

- ♥ Elna Burns - Suffered a stroke. (Sister of Don Olson, member)
- ♥ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found. (member)
- ♥ Ernie Olson - On-going therapy after his stroke. (member)
- ♥ Teri Briley - Cancer treatments continue. (daughter of Gloria and Richard Moore)
- ♥ Sandy Fitzgerald - Cancer treatment continues. (daughter of Gloria and Richard Moore)
- ♥ London Colstan - tiny infant struggling with liver problems. (friend of Morlan/Olson family)
- ♥ David Nange - Healing for regulation of blood pressure and headaches. (Council Member)
- ♥ Fern Matson - Ongoing Health issues. (member)
- ♥ Ambros Lado - Ambros is in a care facility. **New!** He has been diagnosed with cancer which has spread extensively. Pray for his wife, Elizabeth, and their five children, and Regina Ivo, Elizabeth's sister who are leaning heavily on one another through this difficult time. (member)
- ♥ Kristine (Nelson) Mauler - **New!** Recently diagnosed with cancer. Pray for wisdom for the Drs. in the choice of treatment. (former member and daughter of Barb Nelson)

Can we pray for you?

Contact Pastor Laaker with your prayer concerns. The prayers of the righteous avail much!

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Mae Lane

Richard Moore

Thelma Harrahill - (In Kansas with her children)

Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Church. **New!** The Council has several new members. Pray that God will bless your new Council with wisdom and understanding as they work together in the coming year.

Pray for our Vicar, Angela and her family, husband, Benhi and son, Konami.

Pray for James (Benhi) as he does the church office manager job.

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

Pastor Laaker, Grace Lutheran Church

Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod

Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- ♥ Pray for the Sudanese community. Titus Duli, David Nange and Charles Tuv are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.
- ♥ John Ivo Mouto - As commissioner of Mabaan, Ivo has many responsibilities both to his province and to Southern Sudan as he does representative and ambassador work in various refugee camps to raise support for important elections in 2009. His work makes him a target. Pray for his safety! **New!** Ivo is working to be able to come for a few months this year to spend with his wife, Regina and their daughter, Telly. Pray that the situation in Sudan will be stable enough for him to come home.

*"Grant that I may not pray alone with the mouth;
help me that I may pray from the depths of my heart"*

Martin Luther

Wednesday Night Faith Quest
Come Explore God's Word
Free Activities for All Ages!



Grace Lutheran Church
1326 South 26 Street
341-7730

Each Wednesday Night
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

(Free Light Supper at 5:30 p.m.)

Bible Stories, Games,
Crafts, Drama, Music
Lots of fun for everyone



Lutheran Women of Omaha
February Ladies Luncheon

Lutheran Church of the Master
2617 S 114 St.
Omaha, NE
Cost: \$6.00

Program - Lee Trumble of
Project Hope
Project - Scholarship Fund for NE
Synod Seminary Students

Reservations Required by February 8.
Call Mardelle Gocek at 292-1328



Choir Concert

The Augustan Choir
from Sioux Falls, SD is
nationally known
for their performance
of sacred a cappella music.

Free Concert!

The Augustana Choir
Tuesday, February 3, 2009
7:00 p.m.
Peace Presbyterian Church
333 South 204th Street
Elkhorn, NE

You are invited to come !

For more information, call
Scott Thompson
289-4323

Smart is when
you believe only
half of what
you hear.

Brilliant is when
you know which
half to believe.

Orben's Current Comedy



Happening in the Library!

Donate your used books

The Library Board is collecting used books, videos, CD's and cassettes in good condition as a fund-raiser for the Library during Lent.

A sale table will be set up in the Upper Fellowship Hall beginning on Ash Wednesday. Stop by the table and browse any time. This is a self-serve sale. A container for the proceeds will be placed on the table along with the merchandise for sale.

Why not use this opportunity to pass on materials collecting dust on your shelves at home to help provide money to buy new books for the library or stop by and pick up a good used book at a GREAT value!

The Library Board is looking for 2 new Board members to volunteer in the church library. The Board meets once every 6 to 8 weeks. This is a fun committee to be a part of. Activities include planning and setting up the Lent Used Book Sale, planning and crafting the materials for the Summer Reading Club, shopping for new books at the Christian bookstores in Omaha and keeping the books in order and shelved. If you are interested in being a part of this committee, contact Brenda Spahr or Barb Nelson for more information.

Sale

The Library Board
still has a few
2009 Scripture Calendars!
Special Closeout Price

\$3.00 each

Contact the church office to
purchase yours today!

Library Groaners!

What did one book say to the other one?
I just wanted to see if we are on the
same page.

Librarian: Knock knock.

Student: Who's there?

Librarian: Winnie.

Student: Winnie who?

Librarian: Winnie you going to bring back
that overdue book, hm?



Why does an elephant use his trunk as a bookmark?
That way he always nose where he stopped reading.

<http://www.multcolib.org/kids/jokes.html>

“Strange things happen when you’re in debt.
Two weeks ago my car broke down and my
phone got disconnected.
I was one electric bill away from being Amish.”

—Tom Ryan

In a British zoo:
“Please be safe. Do not stand, sit,
climb or lean on zoo fences. If you
fall, animals could eat you and that
might make them sick. Thank you.”



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

Project Hope

The Theme for February is Can Openers/Soup or Stew.

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

Diapers	Dish soap	Bar soap
Deodorant	Toothbrush and toothpaste	
Mouthwash (without alcohol)	Feminine hygiene products	
Hair products (combs, brushes, picks)		Shaving Cream
Razors	Dry Laundry Soap	Bathroom tissue
Kleenex		

We always need paper or plastic bags.

Can You Spare a Buck or Two?

Our youth will hold soup pots at church doors on
Souper Bowl Sunday
February 1, 2009

They will join young people in churches all across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting.

All of the money collected is donated to a charity selected by the participant. None of the money is sent to Souper Bowl headquarters. Organizers only ask that each participant report their collection so national totals can be determined and announced.

Our church will donate the Souper Bowl collection to the Lutheran Pantry.

Please support the youth of our church in this effort to "love our neighbors" by dropping your dollar in the soup pot on February 1, 2009.



Mitten Tree Project Brings Winter Warmth to Needy

The Mitten Tree Project concluded in January, bringing in over 100 gloves, scarves, hats and other winter accessories. All the items collected have been donated to local shelters and agencies for distribution. Thank you to all the people of the congregation who donated items to help keep others warm. Many items were handmade.

Your Warm Hearts and Generous Hands Collected:

4 Adult Hat and gloves sets	2 Kids hat and mitten sets
3 Adult Hat, gloves and scarf sets	32 pairs of mittens
1 Adult Hat and gloves set	40 adult and children's hats



Community News



Teen Mothers & Fathers Project

The Teen Mothers and Fathers Project at St. Martin's is preparing to launch! Your help is needed.

The new program designed to provide a comprehensive program to ensure successful, social, emotional, academic and career development for teen parents at South High School and in the South High Community.

Volunteers are needed to mentor teen mothers and fathers in parenting and academic issues. The program will probably start with 10-12 students. There are presently about 85 teen mothers at South High School, either expecting or who have delivered.

St. Martin's will also house an "Infant Store." We will be gathering with your help, baby blankets, diapers, baby clothes, first reader books, etc.

The program will begin on Wednesday, Feb. 3 and meet every Wednesday through May 6. An end of semester party is scheduled for May 7.

The program will meet at St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church on the corner of 24th and J Streets in South Omaha

Organizations participating are: South Omaha High School Guidance Staff, Visiting Nurses Association of Omaha: Teen Mother's Project Task Group Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Staff, Educare of Omaha and Mosaic Community Development Agency.

For more information, contact Fr. Ron Whitmer at 733-8815 or email him at rdwhitmer7@msn.com

Community Dance Benefit for Omaha Habitat for Humanity

First United Methodist Church
7020 Cass in Cary Hall

Saturday, February 21, 2008
7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

Live Music by
Rivertown String Band
Squares, reels, waltzes

No experience necessary
&
No partner necessary

Eric Manley, Caller

Suggested Donation
\$7.00 per person

Refreshments served.



Need Some Help with Your Life?

Free Counseling is available through the Community Counseling Program.

Allyson Campbell, CMSW, LMHP is available to offer confidential counseling to everyone regardless of their ability to pay. Her office is at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 2315 I Street. Her hours at St. Luke are Tuesdays and Thursdays for 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Call 733-0172 to set up an appointment.

News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



Card Posted on the bulletin Board.

Dear Sisters and Brothers at Grace,
Thank you so much for your generosity. Your Christmas offering was so thoughtful
(and much needed.)
Thank you so much for being a blessing to my family and me!

God's blessings to you,
Vicar Angela, Benhi and Konami



To the wonderful folks at Grace Lutheran,
Thanks so much for the gifts and notes of encouragement during the Christmas and Annual Report season. I found little surprises on my desk and in my mailbox.
You are in my prayers and on my mind as I go through the day. I often breathe a prayer for you as I come across your name!
Thanks for the privilege of serving God together with you over these past 9 years. As I leave this job, I ask that God will bless you all.

Pam Reents, Church Secretary

Dear friends at Grace,
Thank you for continuing to minister to my mother with your cards and cheerful notes. She always appreciates them and reads them over and over.
Many blessings to you in the New Year!
Your in Christ,
Karen Rethmeyer, daughter of Thelma Harrahill

Stay close to God's Word as;
*It will not return empty, but will
accomplish what He desires.*
(Isa 55:11)

Dear friends at Grace,
Thank you so much for coming to my 80th birthday luncheon on December 21. It was a very happy and joyous time for me and I hope it was for you as well. Thank you, too, for the beautiful cards. I've read them over and over.
Again, thank you, and may God bless each and everyone of you.

Barb Nelson

To our dear friends at Grace,
Our family wishes to thank you for your loving support during Ron Jr's illness and passing away to Heaven. Ron's faith remained strong until the last and while we are sad that he had to leave us, we are comforted with the knowledge that we will be together again someday in heaven with God. Our family felt your prayers each day as his illness continued to worsen. Thank you for your constant encouragement, both through the notes you sent and the internet postings at www.caringbridge.com.

Ron and Mickey Andersen, Ron Jr.'s wife, Stacy & children,
Richard and Gloria Moore and extended families.

- ◆ Thanks to Barb Narducci, the very first person to turn in her annual report! Thanks to all of you who worked hard with the office to insure the Annual Report would be as accurate as possible and ready on time. Special thanks to Jack Williams for his dedicated effort and time to help Pam and Pastor produce a clear and concise report.
- ◆ Thanks to the folks who provided cookies and help serve at the Rejoice Lutheran Choir Christmas Cantata fellowship time after worship on December 14th.
- ◆ Thanks to the men who helped with snow removal in December and January.
- ◆ Thanks to the dear people who have so faithfully helped with assembly of the Grace Messenger Newsletter: Lavonne and Bob Moss, Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer, Barb Nelson, June Hilmer, Eva Martin, Brenda Spahr, Gertrude Hufford and Louise Alsager.

Members and Friends,

Mary and I want to thank you for your kind generosity throughout the holiday season. Your thoughtful cards, generous gifts and sincere wishes touch our lives deeply. We are honored by your kindness! We count it a privilege to serve such special people.

God Bless! Pastor and Mary Laaker



WHO: Jerry Van Ormer
 WHAT: A Birthday Cake Reception
 WHEN: February 8th after morning worship
 WHERE: The Upper fellowship Hall at Grace Lutheran
 WHY: Because Jerry is turning 80 years old!

Jerry's family invites you to come and celebrate this milestone in Jerry's life.
 No gifts, please but cards are welcomed!

**Grace Lutheran Church to
 Receive Award at Nebraska Legislature**



Grace Lutheran Church has been named as the 2009 Art Palmer Justice Award recipient. The award is given annually by Justice and Advocacy Ministries, ELCA-NE, in honor and memory of a former partner in ministry, the late Art Palmer. It is awarded to the ELCA congregation in Nebraska that best exemplifies what it means to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8), by utilizing its resources to address areas of injustice in its community.

This year's award is based on Grace's continued and outstanding practice of not only reaching out and welcoming the stranger in our midst (refugees and immigrants), but also on its work in advocating for systemic change through education and legislative advocacy. So many people and congregations are charitable and offer a great deal of direct assistance to those in need. Grace goes beyond that, however, by also addressing the root causes of injustice that leave the vulnerable weak and powerless and in need of charity.

The award will be presented to Grace at the annual Lutheran Day at the Legislature luncheon, which is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 24, 2009, at noon. Ten seats are reserved for the people of Grace at the event. The event will be held at the State Capitol Building in Lincoln.

More information is posted on the bulletin board. If you would like to attend, contact Pastor Laaker as soon as possible.



Virginia McGill
Director (660-6689)

Gema Wolde
(616-4721)
Se habla español.

Interfaith Health Service, Kindness in the Community

"Every time you opt in to kindness
Make one connection used to divide us
It Echoes All over the world" -- Echoes, Dar Williams

I have long been a fan of singer/songwriter/community organizer Dar Williams. One of her new songs, Echoes, has not been far from my CD player these days. The lyrics listed above have especially resonated with me as I attend various meetings in the community to seek ideas and partnerships for our Latinas in Action program during this time of transition and new growth.

While Interfaith Health Service has the mission of providing hope and healing in Omaha, I believe a large part of that mission involves about making connections. Connections with our neighbors, connections with our brothers and sisters, connections on the human and heart levels within our churches, local agencies and programs. The simple act of opting in to kindness, rather than focusing on what divides us is a radical act. Seemingly simple, yet requiring commitment and awareness.

The echoes I have personally witnessed within Interfaith's ministry these past months include the following:

- ◆ Interfaith participants working together to raise money for a friend whose son died and who did not have money for a funeral.
- ◆ Our Latinas in Action women and their families coming together at Grace Lutheran Church for a lovely Christmas celebration.
- ◆ Teenage participants working hard with each other on team building and sharing activities.
- ◆ Volunteers, teachers and physicians in the community asking how they can become more involved with Interfaith's work.
- ◆ Funders exploring possibilities of partnership and connection with Interfaith.
- ◆ David, one of our youngest teen participants, saying that his Friday nights with Interfaith's Super Kids Club are the best part of his weekend.

This New Year, I pray that together we may continue to echo the kindness that Interfaith programs seek to facilitate in the community.

Virginia McGill, Interfaith

An old man limped into the doctor's office and said, "Doctor, my knee hurts so bad, I can hardly walk!"

The doctor slowly eyed him from head to toe, paused, and then said, "Sir, how old are you?"

"I'm 98," the man announced proudly.

The doctor just sighed and looked at him again. Finally he said, "Sir, I'm sorry. I mean, just look at you. You are almost one hundred years old, and you're complaining that your knee hurts? Well, what did you expect?"

The old man said, "Well, my other knee is 98 years old too, and it doesn't hurt



<http://www.gcfl.net>



From the Editor

Thanks And Farewell

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

*Genesis 12:1
KJV*

I feel like Abraham today. Since this is the last article I will write for this newsletter as your church secretary, there is a sense of sadness. I know many of you have wondered, “Why?”

In Genesis 12, God tells Abraham to go to a new land. In the past several months, I have felt that God has been speaking to me in the same way, that God has been leading me to go in a new path. I had many arguments with myself about staying or leaving my job here at Grace. But even in the disquieted times, I still felt that God was leading me away.

I prayed diligently, wanting to be sure that I had heard God correctly, longing to do exactly what He wanted. I enlisted my dear friend, Marilee, my mother, my husband and daughter to pray about it with me as well. The answer seemed clear but also puzzling a bit. Abraham was the Bible character that came to mind as I contemplated what to do. As with Abraham, God told him to move on out. Abe had to wonder, “Just where am I going?” God’s reply, “To a land that I will show you!” No clue as to where that new land would be or how long it would take to get there.

Though the Bible doesn’t say exactly, Abraham probably wasn’t unhappy with living in the land of Ur. He had friends, “his kindred,” there. He had family there because God asked to leave his father’s house. I can imagine how hard it would be explain his choice to his family and friends...even his wife, “Why?”

The first few verses of Genesis 12 are filled with God’s promise to Abraham to bless him. Of course, we know now that this was the beginning of God’s blessing to make Abraham a great nation. God chose to send His only Son, Jesus Christ through the Jewish people. Perhaps this was the first real test of Abraham’s faith, rounding up all he had and heading out, waiting on God to guide.

As with Abraham, I am not sure where I will go. I know there are some family items to attend to, opportunities to spend with my mother and my friends and trips to take. There are creative avenues and dreams that I could pursue. So along with the sadness I feel, there is also anticipation for what God will show me.

I have enjoyed the privilege of serving with you and for you. There have been many times of joy and celebration as well as the tears that came when you suffered loss. I know God used me in your lives. To God be the Glory! I also know that God used you in my life. Many of you have become my very dearest friends.

However, as I was talking to God about missing all of you, He reminded me that He is not calling me to heaven! I can still stay in touch with you. I hope that you will continue to contact me via email or phone. I will continue to keep you in my prayers. Thank you for your love, prayers and support over these past 9 years. Stay true to your faith. He’s coming back soon!

Love to you all,
Pam Reents

FEBRUARY

- ◆ named after the Latin term “februum,” which means purification.
- ◆ The birthstone is amethyst.
- ◆ The flower is primrose or violet
- ◆ February begins on the same day of the week as March and November in a common year (non-leap year) and on the same day of the week as August in a leap year

Happy Groundhog Day!
 The Groundhog Carol
 To the tune of
 “It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”

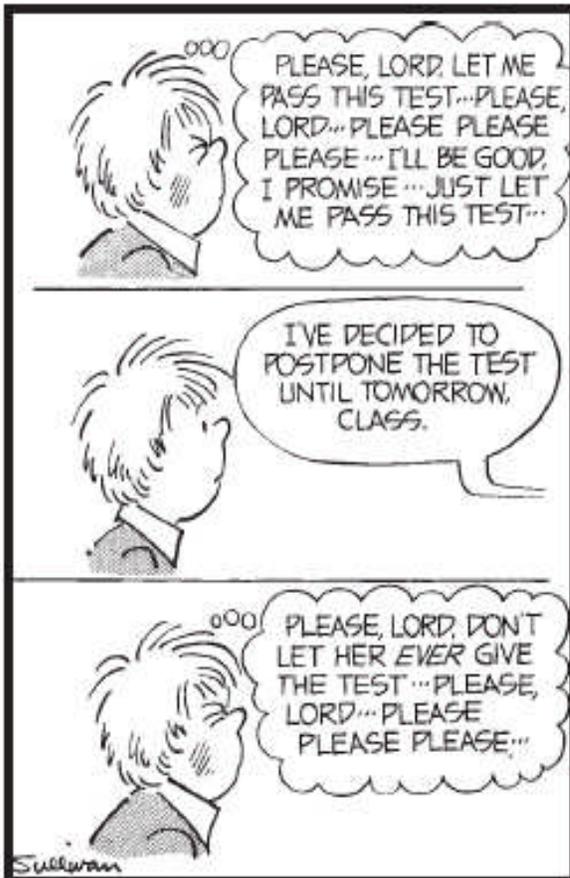
It CAME upON a GROUND Hog Day,
 That GLORious RITual OOOOLLLLLDDDDDDDD.
 We WAIT to HEAR a MARmot SAY,
 How LONG it's GONna stay COOOLLLLLDDDDDD!
 Peace ON the FARM, this GROUND Hog Day,
 We eat soup and SHHINNNGG and DANCE....
 For ONCE the GROUND Hog is UP for
 GOOOODDDDDDD,
 He'll EAT up ALL of your PLAAAANNNTTTTTTS!

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“We have two choices for Valentine’s Day: we can fly away by private jet to a romantic meal in Bali, or we can plunk down 12 bucks for the church’s spaghetti supper.”

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Valentine’s Day love letters

From Mark Twain to Olivia Langdon (1869):

“For I do love you, Livy... as the dew loves the flowers; as the birds love the sunshine; as the wavelets love the breeze; as mothers love their first-born; as memory loves old faces; as the yearning tides love the moon; as the angels love the pure in heart.”

From Winston Churchill to Clementine Churchill (1935):

“Time passes so swiftly, but is it not joyous to see how great and growing is the treasure we have gathered together, amid the storms and stresses of so many eventful and, to millions, tragic and terrible years?”

