

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

Vicar - Angela Khabeb

Editor/Church Secretary – Benhi Khabeb

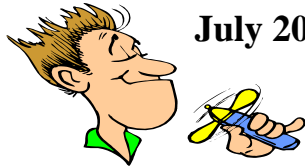
Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr

Organist - Lynda Laird

Sexton - Brian Sutej

Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill

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July 2009

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

THE GRACE MESSENGER

2009 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Sarah Emery (Sec)	June Hilmer
Andrew Edwards	Arlone Farber	Vicky Cox
David Nange	Ernest Olson	Gloria Moore
Vicar Angela Khabeb	Pastor Laaker	

** *****

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Margie Sutej



The regular meeting of the Council was held June 9th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing; Ron's neighbor Angelo, care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal; Ambros Lado and his struggle with cancer, Mickey Andersen and her foot pains. Pastor led devotions from 1 Chronicles 22.13 and Luke 10.3. The first encourages us to "get to work." The second sends us out to perform these works, with the confidence that the Lord will be with us.

Visions for Ministry: The Council is reading "*Radical Welcome*" by Stephanie Spellers. Please read pages 63-74 in the book by the next meeting.

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

Christian Education: Faith Quest will resume in August when school resumes.

Evangelism/Outreach: Kids At Work has begun.

Finance: Council reviewed the end of Internship and the plans for a continued ministry relationship with Angela through this calendar year. A letter will be sent to the congregation regarding these plans.

Property: A property damage claim has been submitted to Church Mutual. This is the result of the hail damage in June 2008. The Tuesday night Morris Wave dancers have informed us that they are no longer going to meet.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

Support/Stewardship: The Fall Campaign theme will be "Empowered by God, responding by Grace."

Worship: Ms. Laird will remain with us throughout the summer and then reevaluate her position. Volunteer nursery attendants might be helpful for families with toddlers.

Unfinished Business: Plans are in place for Pastor Laaker's 30th Anniversary of Ordination celebration on June 14th.

New Business: A review of the Nebraska Synod Assembly was shared with council.

Announcements: Pastor will be at a Seminary reunion June 23-25 in Chicago. Confirmation camp will be July 5-10. Sarah Emery will bring treats and lead prayer for our July meeting.



Fear! It is ever before us, behind us, in us. I have written briefly on its effects previously. However, I was touched by the words written by Stephanie Spellers, in *Radical Welcome*, the book the Congregation Council is reading this year.

In it she writes: “Fear is never the final word in any story with God. Far more often, the bold act of acknowledging fear starts a new chapter. For Christians, that is the whole story of the resurrection. We are invited to participate in Christ’s death and in his resurrection, to let the power that destroyed death now free us to be the living body of Christ...

That resurrection does not simply come on some unknown but imagined day when God will raise all those who have lived in God’s embrace. It is a resurrection we can experience whenever we face death, all the tiny deaths that threaten to sap our souls. It is a resurrection that allows us to occupy a completely new posture in our daily lives. If death is not the end, if God’s power defeats any enemy, including the most fearsome of all, then we can step forward and proclaim, hope, serve, and love without fear. Rainer Maria Rilke

shares this stirring promise in one of his *Love Poems to God*:

God speaks to each of us as he makes us
then walks with us silently out of the night.
These are the words we dimly hear:

You, sent out beyond your recall,
go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.
Flare up like flame
and make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.
Don’t let yourself lose me.

Nearby is the country they call Life.
You will know it by its seriousness.

Give me your hand.

“If we know ourselves to be unconditionally loved like that, if we know even death is not the end, Henri Nouwen points out, we are dangerously free to love and surrender all for Christ. We can go anywhere, even if it means we might be rejected, even if it means we have to look deep into the heart of our own fear. We can go to the most terrifying place in the world, because we know we are ‘loved beyond [the] boundaries’ of the world.”

It is so easy to get caught in fearful thinking. I remember well conversations that I had with members of Grace some 20+ years ago; conversations that expressed fears about the survival of Grace congregation. As I recall, I asked the question, “what do you think God wants to happen here, now?” I think that question continues to be a very important question. “What do you think God wants to happen here, now?”

God continues to surprise me with ministry opportunities that push me to explore those “fearful” places. I am grateful for God’s tender mercy and surrounding love that encourages me to take God’s hand and walk confidently into the future.

I invite you to consider the question, pray for wisdom, seek God’s guidance and boldly trust God’s leading. Someone once said, “we cannot out give God.” Lord, may I fully trust your leading. May I place myself into your hand. Bless us, I pray. Amen.

Pastor Laaker



The Vicar's Voice

"I give thanks to my God always for you . . ." I Corinthians 1:4

They say that time flies when you're having fun. Well, believe it or not, sisters and brothers, I have reached the end of my internship. Therefore, this is my last *official* newsletter article as your Vicar. But not to worry, I will still be around in a limited capacity. But even still, I thought it only fitting to reflect upon my year with you at Grace. My internship has been an enriching and rewarding experience that has further solidified my commitment to parish ministry. I have always felt a strong sense of call throughout most of my life. But serving with you all has awakened a sprit of ministry within me.

Through my time with you, I have developed a healthy respect for the call to ordained ministry. I am mindful that this calling touches every facet of my life and the lives of the people around me. That is why I count it a joy and a privilege to offer my gifts and talents in service to the body of Christ. Although the thought of branching out is, at times, intimidating, I trust that God's sustaining power will enable me to "lead a life worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27). I also trust that as I grow and mature, my life will reflect God's love and grace to the community in which I will serve. I pray that, as an ordained member of the body of Christ, I will be able to assist my Christian sisters and brothers as we each live out our individual and corporate faith journeys.

I have learned so much during this process. You all have taught me a lot about parish ministry. I have learned the importance of being a transparent leader who is willing to live under the accountability of the people I serve. Through my time with you, I have also learned a lot about myself. This experience has encouraged me to strive to live a life marked by holy living and a faithful witness. Certainly I am far from perfect. But, with God's help, I will be able to live a life that reflects the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thank you so much to all of my sisters and brothers of Grace Lutheran Church. No matter where I go or what I do, you all will be permanently etched in my heart. Although I hesitate to thank people by name (for fear of an oversight on my part) I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge at least a few people.

Of course Pastor Laaker! Pastor Laaker has acted as an excellent supervisor and mentor by providing ample opportunity to experience the fullness of parish life. He has been marvelous and has encouraged me to try new and different things. Through his efforts, I have become a more confident and competent leader.

I also owe a special debt of gratitude to my internship committee members; Arlone Farber, David Huford, Greg Hula, Marsha Moyer, Ernie Olson, and Amanda Vazquez. These wonderful behind-the-scenes people faithfully worked to ensure the success of my internship. They have been very supportive and caring and have freely offered me their time, guidance, and compassion. Through their loyal and loving actions, I am fully convinced that my internship committee members genuinely care about me both personally and professionally. It has truly been a rewarding relationship.

Thank you again to my entire Grace family for helping to shape my future pastoral identity.

With love,

Vicar Angela Khabebe

Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends



- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found. (member)
- ◆ Sandy Fitzgerald - Cancer treatments continues. (member)
- ◆ David Nange's son, Paul as he recovers from surgery on his knee. (Council member)
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - As he struggles with dizziness and breathing problems.(member)
- ◆ La Vonne Moss -Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Fern Matson - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Elna Burns - Suffered a stroke sister of Don Olson (member)
- ◆ Kristine (Nelson) Mauler- Treatment for her cancer. (daughter of Barbara Nelson))
- ◆ Arlone Farber - Treatment for her cancer. (member)
- ◆ Wendy Henexson- Recovery from transplant surgery. (daughter of Pastor Liz Conner)
- ◆ Ambros Lado - Ongoing health issues and as a result of cancer. (member)

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.

Pray for the new Council Members. Ask God to bless their ministry among us.

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

Pastor Laaker

Vicar Angela and family

Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod

Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- ◆ Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Titus Duli, David Nange and Charles Tuw are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.
- ◆ Remember John Ivo Mouto. John is working several very dangerous locations in Africa.

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

This Summer at VBS

We will be going to **ROME** to visit
Paul and the Underground Church

Monday, July 20th

through

Friday, July 24th, 2009

Evenings: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.



***Everyone**, please save these dates and plan to join in the fun!*

My hope is that you would begin collecting items at your home and bring them to church beginning **Sunday, June 28th**. Our list of needed items will continue to grow, and it will be posted on the Rome bulletin board in the upper fellowship hall.

Most importantly, many volunteers are needed to truly “show” the children how the early Christian Church might have looked. There are opportunities throughout the week to pose as people in Paul’s community. Even if you can only volunteer for a day or two, we will gladly find a role for you.

Leaders and Assistants are needed for the following:

Apprenticeship Games – need 2 volunteers

Market Shopkeepers - Grammaticus, Carpentry, Architecture, Wreathmaking, and more (easy crafts)

Roman Family leaders – need 6 to 8 volunteers

Drama Team :

- Brutus – Paul’s Roman guard
- Festus – an athlete
- Tullius – a male slave
- Senator Atticus – a man
- Two Roman Soldiers – men
- Severus – architect
- Marcus – a man
- Claudia – a woman food shop proprietor
- Thief – a young person

Junia – a woman metal worker

We will want to “dress the part,” so there’s plenty of preparation needed to get folks into costume, which will include, togas, robes, and Roman guard armor. Check your Halloween boxes for articles that might fit our needs.

Three to four planning meetings will be held; please watch Sunday Bulletin for more info.

Your ideas and suggestions are important, so the invitation is open for everyone to join in the planning process.

We have much to do to get to Rome by July 20th!

Please search your heart and volunteer for something that sounds like fun.

I can assure you, it will be! Janet Hula, Rome’s Ultimate Director

There’s No Place Like Rome!

Community News



"Helping Hands"

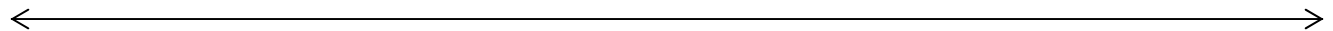
Working Together in God's service

Pantry Needs

Project Hope
4205 Boyd St
Omaha, NE 68111

Project Hope
The Theme for July is
Back to School items

Project Hope always needs boxes of zip lock bags in quart or gallon size, soup, peanut butter, macaroni and cheese dinners, pasta, rice, diapers, bathroom tissue and feminine hygiene items.



Each July and August, Project Hope and First Lutheran Church help needy children get a good start on the school year by providing backpacks and school supplies.

As you shop this summer, consider purchasing some school supplies to help with the enormous demand. Place your donations on the pantry shelf in the Upper Hall. **Thanks for your help!**

**Columbus Park
Neighborhood
Association**

*Next Meeting
July 16, 2009 7:00 p.m.
Here at Grace Church.*



Marriage or
Family Problems?
Depressed?
Unable to Cope with life?

Free Counseling is Available.

If you would like more information or to set up an appointment, please call Allyson Campbell at South High at 557-3675 or St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 733-0172.

News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



Dear Sisters and Brothers of Grace

Thank you so much for the wonderful graduation party. It was such a perfect day. Thank you also for the lovely pewter cross, the inspirational plaque, the miniature roses and balloon bouquet. Everything was amazing! I am so glad that God has placed me here for my internship, you are such a blessing. Thank you again for being a source of happiness and support for me and my family. Blessings to you.

Vicar Angela.

THANK YOU

Dear Friends,

I want to express my deepest appreciation for the wonderful love and care you shared with me on the occasion of my 30th Anniversary of Ordination. The meal was delicious! The cards were very warm and touching! I am blessed and you are all a part of this wonderful blessing. Thank You! Pastor Laaker



Wednesday Night Faith Quest

Thank You! Thank You! Wednesday Faith Quest has taken a break for the summer. Our first year of providing an educational experience apart from Sunday morning has been a wonderful blessing. We are deeply thankful for all those that helped by providing food for our simple meals, leadership for the weekly interest groups, musical talents that helped our singing, prayers that anchored us well in the grace of God.

We had a high in participation with 40 children and twenty adults. Our low was fifteen children and four adults. Creativity ran high with capable leaders and willing students. Truly God was glorified as we studied, shared our talents, and lifted our voices.

We hope you'll take this time to thank God! We also hope you'll consider lending a hand in middle August as we once again gather for Wednesday Faith Quest.



Virginia McGill
Director, (402) 660-6689
Gema Wolde
(402) 616 4721
Se habla español .

Latinas in Action Participants Celebrate Milestones Together!

One of the many blessings about my work with Latinas in Action is getting to share in the special celebrations of our participants and their families. This month, several of Interfaith's Latinas in Action families were invited to a fabulous celebration for Abbey (the daughter of Maria, and sister of Veronica, both of whom have participated in our Interfaith group for over two years). Abbey is a proud 2009 graduate of Bryan High School and her mom is quite possibly the most proud "parent of the graduate" that I have encountered this year. In the best of all possible ways.

Maria rented out the entire hall of a restaurant in South Omaha, just off 24th street for Abbey's celebration, and not one chair in the entire hall was empty. Friends, relatives, co-workers and Latinas in Action participants all arrived to congratulate Abbey and her mom and dad, while the dinner and dancing went on until midnight. Gema and her family and my family and I were so honored to be in attendance. It isn't every day that we are blessed in being welcomed into a family and a celebration the way we were welcomed by Maria. She took a lot of time to sit with us at our table and ask about our lives, even though she had many people to see. She also helped ensure that Abbey, dressed in her graduation cap, personally spoke with us upon arrival and escorted us to a table, and walked us to the door upon our exit.

Perhaps one of the many reasons Maria is proud of Abbey is that Abbey won a state-wide scholarship for an essay on her desire to attend college and the desire to learn instilled in her by her primary role model, her mom. When I pressed Maria, a woman of great humility when it comes to her own accomplishments, she promised to bring a copy of Abbey's essay to the next Latinas in Action class to share it with our participants. I asked Maria if I could write an article about the graduation fiesta for our Interfaith newsletters and she said "only if you change my name. But my daughter's name, you don't have to change. I am so proud of her. What a blessing to have a daughter who has accomplished so much." And I, in turn, am equally blessed by Maria and all of our participants who have such a commitment to learning within Interfaith's programs.

Virginia McGill Interfaith



**Neighbors South
Habitat for Humanity
Build Begins
Building Site:
1952 S 14th Street
Omaha, NE**

Can You Help?

The summer build project for the Neighbors South Coalition began on June 19, 2009 with framing the exterior walls, interior walls and the trusses. There is still much to accomplish by the target completion date to be announced.

Volunteers are needed to help in all areas of construction, food preparation and service, and cleanup. There are two shifts per day. The morning shift is from 7:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. with a snack and lunch provided. The afternoon shift is from 12:30 - 5:30 p.m. with a snack provided.

Whether you are a skilled construction worker, a handy man type or just willing to learn, there is a job for you. On site volunteer coordinators are also needed to over see check-in, lunch and snack set up, cleanup or just being a "go fer."

If you are interested in being a part of this wonderful and satisfying project, volunteer forms are available at the back of the sanctuary or through the church office by calling 341-7730.

7th Annual Grace Lutheran Library Summer Reading Club June 21 - September 9

"Petal Your Way through Summer"

Each book you read from the church library will earn another petal on your flower!



Sign up to be a part of our Grace Lutheran "Flower Power."

Requirements: As you read, record the number of pages you have completed on your petal and add more fluff to your flower.

Everyone completing the minimum required reading will receive a certificate, a small consolation prize and free admission to the celebration party at the end of the summer. The top readers in each category will receive an additional prize at the party.

Minimum requirements for free admission to the party:

50 pages for the "read to Me" crowd. (Non-readers and early beginners)

75 pages for the Primary Grades. (Grades 1-3)

125 pages for the Elementary Grades. (Grades 4-6)

175 pages for Jr. High and High School. (Grades 7-12)

225 pages for Adults.

Kids At Work 2009



Kids At Work is going strong with our third week now complete. Kids enrolled this year are:

Bradley Collett

Kiara Harlan
Patrick McPeck
Autumn Smith
Danaka Yale-Ashcraft

Alex Everitt

Shedu Lado
Jacob Quandt
Andrea Spahr

Bianca Fredrickson

Sonia Lado

Daniel Sher
Taylor Terpstra

Some of this summer's special volunteer team leaders are :

Vicar Angela Khabeb
Nick Fredrickson

Liz Singles
Benhi Khabeb

Carolyn Matson

It's not too late to volunteer and have some fun this summer!

This year Kids At Work is going to the following work sites:

Cristo Rey: The youth stock the food pantry, clean where needed and yard care.

Lutheran Home: The youth interact with residents, such as passing out magazines and painting finger nails!

Precious Memories: The youth help with the younger kids whether providing a special friend for the morning, playing or reading with a group of kids, putting away donated food supplies and helping with lunch time meal preparations.

Grace Lutheran: The youth will be helping out with special projects such as flyer distribution for Vacation Bible School, Newsletter Assembly, Sorting the Clothing Room in the basement and helping out where needed.

Brenda Spahr

Kids At Work , Director



Good Morning!

Full of Energy and Ready to work! Early Birds are from left to right: Danaka, Andrea, Sonia, Benhi and Shedu.

**"Hear and you forget;
see and you remember;
do and you understand."**



Youth In Mission-

Where is Samantha?

Well she is travelling to Mexico with the LSTC summer youth, that help youth interact with each other and also bring social awareness of different cultures and parts of the world. Please keep Samantha and the rest of summer youth crew in prayer. By the way check with the church office to claim your reward if you find Samantha in this photo... *Where is Samantha ?*



July is...

National Baked Beans Month
National Ice Cream Month
National Tennis Month
Read An Almanac Month
Anti-Boredom Month
Hitchhiking Month



Top Ten Caddy Comments

Golfer: "Think I'm going to drown myself in the lake."

Caddy: "Think you can keep your head down that long?"

Golfer: "I'd move heaven and earth to break 100 on this course."

Caddy: "Try heaven, you've already moved most of the earth."

Golfer: "Do you think my game is improving?"

Caddy: "Yes sir, you miss the ball much closer now."

Golfer: "You've got to be the worst caddy in the world."

Caddy: "I don't think so sir. That would be too much of a coincidence."

Golfer: "Please stop checking your watch all the time. It's too much
of a distraction."

Caddy: "It's not a watch - it's a compass."

Golfer: "Do you think I can get there with a 5 iron?"

Caddy: "Eventually."

Golfer: "How do you like my game?"

Caddy: "Very good sir, but personally, I prefer golf."

Golfer: "Do you think it's a sin to play on Sunday?"

Caddy: "The way you play, sir, it's a sin on any day."

Golfer: "This is the worst course I've ever played on."

Caddy: "This isn't the golf course. We left that an hour ago."

Golfer: "That can't be my ball, it's too old."

Caddy: "It's been a long time since we teed off, sir."

A fellow computer programmer asked for my help in putting new software into operation. At first, he handled most of the work. Eventually, though, he asked me to help with the last phase of the training. When I sat down with one woman and told her I would be showing her how to make changes to the files, she sighed with relief. "I'm so glad you're teaching me instead of him." Surprised, I said that my colleague was far more experienced than I was. "Yes," she said, "but I feel much more comfortable with you. I get nervous around really smart people."

