

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

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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 - Lynda Laird

Sexton - Brian Sutej/Titus Duli

Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill

Lutheran Volunteer - Anna Ernst

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

March 2011



THE GRACE MESSENGER



2011 Council Members

Titus Duli
Ralph Fitle
Carolyn Matson

Andrew Edwards
David Hufford
Ernest Olson
Pastor Laaker

Arlone Farber
Greg Hula
Samantha Trejo

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Margie Sutej

The regular meeting of the Council was held on February 8. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: we pray for Kevin Courtney, as he struggles with side effects from chemotherapy treatments for colon cancer; we pray for our shut-in's, Barbara Nelson, Barb Narducci, and Mae Lane; we pray for Jimmy Wyman as he recovers from a motorcycle accident; we pray for Steve Cerveney, as his dad underwent surgery for cancer today; we pray for our new Council members, who will offer guidance, discussion, and vision as leaders; we pray for the family of Dave Smith, as Dave died from cancer; we pray for Angela Khabeb, as she "embarks" on her ministry in Delphos, Ohio; we pray for a peaceful resolution of the historic referendum for South Sudan's independence; we pray for Elaine McKenzie, who suffers from cancerous spots; we pray for Barb Vlasik, who is having a pacemaker device put in, along with a host of other medical problems; we pray for Scott McPhillips, who is in constant pain and we pray for his wife, Debbie McPhillips, who will be having surgery; we pray for Rusty Bailey, who is in constant pain with his knees and elbows, but has started a new job and cannot take any time off for recovery; we pray for Tamara Krantzner, who has been unemployed for two years; we pray for the millions of people across the nation that are unemployed; we pray for Harun Shibba, who is ill; we pray for all people suffering from physical and emotional trauma caused by natural disasters; we pray for the needs of our Sudanese brothers and sisters; we pray for the safety of armed service personnel, police and firefighters; and as we count our many blessings, we pray for the poor, the hungry, the homeless, and the oppressed.

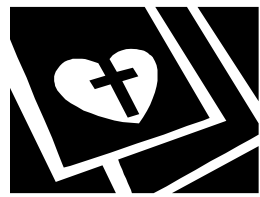
Pastor Laaker reading the selected verses of 1 Samuel 17:32 and Romans 5:5 from the "Daily Texts" led devotions. This verse from Samuel tells us not to lose courage or lose heart when things happen in our midst that cause us to be doubtful, despairing, and fearful. Romans tells us that God's love sustains us, gives us hope, and restores our faith. There is nothing greater than God's love and without hope, there is nothing.

Visions for Ministry: The Council has started discussion on a book titled, "*Leadership in Congregations*." The first chapter talks about the challenges and changes that are presented to us in a time where we need to focus on new commitments and providing hope so that we can work together to move in the direction allowed by God. We must have a vision so we can be what Christ has called us to be.

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

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: Anna Ernst gave the Council a brief update on the After School Program. May 19th is the last day for the program this year. The future of the program is still in question, but Anna has plans for meeting with parents and community leaders for some ideas.



FROM THE PASTOR

I have just returned from the Assistants to the Bishops Conference. The title of the conference was “Discerning God’s Preferred Future: Feeling Swamped.” Two major presenters shared their thoughts with us. Dr. Steed Davidson invited us to look at the prophet Isaiah, chapters 40-55. He described these chapters as “God’s Redemption of a Defeated People.” I have to admit; I have found the recent readings from Isaiah, on Sunday mornings, most interesting. While I do not see us as defeated people, there are plenty of things within our society that place heavy burdens on our lives, on our hopes and on our future.

It is easy to forget God’s care and provision when life deals so many difficult things our way. It is easy to become worried and anxious when the daily news tells us of the unrest that springs forth in countries throughout Africa and the Middle East. It is easy to become discouraged when the news out of Washington is that elected Representatives are willing to shut down the government programs that help women, children, students and those programs that serve those most in need. It is frightening to find the prices for gasoline jumping up each and every week. There are questions about why jobs are so hard to come by. There are questions about the future of our schools. The list can go on and on.

Isaiah says that faithful people forget. They murmur against God. “God has forsaken me.” Yet, Isaiah challenges the people to look closely at their lives. He uses an interesting image; “Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands.”

God has not forgotten or forsaken any one of us. This marvelous image is one of tender care and mercy. A mother nursing her child is a picture of tremendous love, adoration, compassion, care, devotion, etc. This is how God acts in relationship with each one of us, says Isaiah.

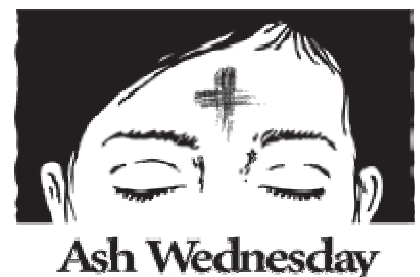
I have to admit that when I see a mother holding her child, I see a love that surrounds that child with nothing but goodness and blessings. I know the child will cry out at times, wondering, will my mother care for me. She always does. She holds and comforts. She soothes and speaks tenderly calming the fears. She wants nothing but good for her child.

I need to be reminded that this is the way God feels about me, about you. I am surrounded by God’s tender care. God holds me and speaks tender words of peace when I am worried and anxious. God soothes the pain and discomfort of hurt and harm. God speaks tender words of grace, forgiveness and love when I am fearful.

Pastor Laaker

Posted by a pastor on JN’s Facebook:

“On Ash Wednesday, a nine-year-old girl who had never been in a church service asked my wife what I was putting on people’s foreheads. When my wife whispered ‘ashes,’ the girl looked horrified and asked, ‘Whose?!’”



Continued...

Finance: Ernie Olson and Jack Williams are getting in touch with individuals who will be giving bids and furnishing information that will be shared at the Special Congregational Meeting, which will be held on March 6th.

Property: Nothing new to report other than the information listed under “Finance.”

Service/Social Ministry: OTOC will sponsor a presentation at St. Pius, The Tenth, on Wednesday, February 9th in regards to “Immigration/Racism”. OTOC, along with other community leaders is very concerned that LB48 encourages racial profiling. We are encouraged to see all people as loved by God.

Support/Stewardship: No new report.

Worship: A reminder that Ash Wednesday begins on March 9th.

Unfinished Business: No unfinished business.

New Business: The Council made a motion to have a letter sent in the mail to each congregational member announcing the Special Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, March 6th, in the Church Sanctuary, immediately following the worship service.

Announcements: Arlone Farber will bring treats and lead the closing pray for our March 2011 Council meeting. Pastor Laaker will be attending a couple of upcoming conferences. Andrew Edwards, Ralph Fitle, Don Olson, and Greg Hula will be attending the Lutheran Men’s Mission on Saturday, Feb 12th.

Anyone who would like to stay informed of recent Global Missions and additional items within the ELCA contact information is listed below.

God’s work. Our hands.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 1-800-638-3522



Get regular updates from around the world!

Subscribe to *Global Links*, the monthly ELCA Global Mission e-newsletter, at www.elca.org/global-links.

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facebook.com/Lutherans

 Follow us on Twitter
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Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.



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

- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found. (member)
- ◆ Mae Lane - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ La Vonne Moss - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Ferne Matson - Ongoing health issues. (member)
- ◆ Barbara Nelson - as she recovers from a stroke. (member)
- ◆ Barbara Narducci - as she continues to recover from her fall. (member)
- ◆ Margie Sutej - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Brian Sutej - as he recovers from a broken leg. (member)

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Mae Lane - St Joe Villa.

Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, 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 Laaker

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.

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

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve...
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health, that I might do great things...
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy...
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men...
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life...
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.
I got nothing that I asked for...
But everything that I hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered...
I am among all men most richly blessed. Amen.



*Found in the clothing of an
unknown Civil War soldier.*



QUILTING GROUP

Quilting 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.

Coffee break is at 10:00 a.m.

Lutheran Women of Omaha
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
4117 Terrace Drive
Tuesday, March 8, 2011
12:00 Noon

Program: Mary Kerr from YWCA
Project: Monetary for Stephan Center
Reservations by March 6, 2011 to Mardelle Gocsek, 292-1328
Cost of Luncheon: \$6.00

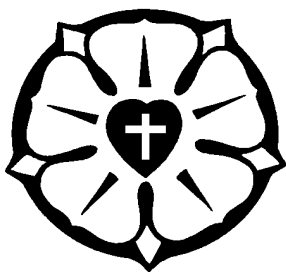


*Women of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

*The 2011 Flower Chart has been posted
on the bulletin board
outside the church office.*

• F L O W E R C H A R T •

We **still** need volunteers to sign up each month to pick up the flowers for the altar. Sign up on the Flower Chart if you are willing to help with this task. The flowers need to be picked up before 10:00 a.m. each Sunday morning at the Hy-Vee at 50th and Center. The church is billed so you will not need to pay for them at the time of pick up. Contact Marilyn Van Ormer or Joe Narducci for more details.



Introducing LivingLutheran.com Connect With Lutherans

The new LivingLutheran.com is live! This is your place for fresh, daily content and conversation on what it means to “live Lutheran”. Read exclusive blog entries by ELCA Lutherans with a wide variety of viewpoints and opinions. Find your favorite articles from Seeds for the Parish. Watch videos that amuse and inspire. Meet fascinating ELCA members, and join the conversation on topics that matter most to you. We’re probably being a bit presumptuous, but we like to think that Martin Luther would approve. There’s something different on LivingLutheran.com each day. Don’t miss out. Check back daily for new stories of inspiration, videos and more.



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!

4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday

Games, Crafts, and Fun Geared for Elementary Kids!

Free!

Director, Anna Ernst



Last month, I wrote that I wanted to continue to work with you to connect Grace's church building and congregation to the neighborhood in which it is located. I also said that I would be introducing some new visuals, ideas and ways to serve. With those thoughts in mind, I would like to highlight two events that are planned at Grace this month.

On Friday, March 4th, at 6:30 pm in the Upper Fellowship Hall, we will host another fun night similar to the one we held in November. This time, we're calling it "Family Fun Night", because even though the games and movie will be kid-friendly, I'd really love to see congregation and community members of all ages come and enjoy each other's company! We will have a pizza dinner at 6:30, have some board or card games available for different groups to play, and then start the movie on the projector by 7:30 or so. You don't have to stay the whole time, but if you come, you may want to! And if you want to see what movie we're going to show, you're just going to have to come find out for yourself... J

The other event I am very excited for is the Neighborhood Walk, planned for Saturday, March 26th. We will gather at Grace at 11:30 am for lunch, and then walk the neighborhood on a route that I will plan out and pre-walk beforehand. Along the way, we will observe, reflect on what we observe, and think together about how Grace's congregation can continue to grow and support ministry in the neighborhood, together with and alongside our neighbors. Those of you who have Grace Lutheran Church shirts are encouraged to wear them. I hope you will come!

If you will be coming to either of these events, it would be helpful if you would let me know so I can plan food! There will be sign-up sheets on the bulletin board that I am currently in the process of re-decorating in the Upper Fellowship Hall. You can reach me at the office, at 402-957-1275 (my work cell phone number), or email me at anna.r.ernst@gmail.com.

Finally, in personal news, I will be away on a retreat with my housemates and the LVC houses from the Twin Cities on March 10 - 14, and my parents will be visiting Omaha the weekend of March 18-20! See you at church!

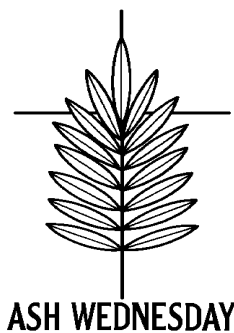


The season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 9. Lent offers us the opportunity to focus on our practice of faith. There are many critiques of Christians who say one thing but do another. Lent is a time of repentance where we can be honest about our lives and the daily practice of faith.

Lent, the season of repentance, begins with a reminder of our profound sin and mortality (Ash Wednesday), and walks us all the way to a cross, which, if we are honest, we recognize as the place where we crucified the Son of God.

Our mid-week services will focus on a theme: Faith Is . . . We will have different speakers share their thoughts about their practice of faith. This may take the form of service or meditation, or any number of other possibilities. Please plan to come each week and hear an inspirational message. We will use Holden Evening Prayer as our worship service format.

May we be blessed in our Lenten journey as people of faith.



Ash Wednesday
March 9, 2011
Supper at 6:00 p.m.
Worship at 7:00 p.m.

**Volunteers are Needed to
 Serve and Prepare
 Lenten Dinners**

Hosts and Hostesses are needed to prepare and serve the Wednesday Night Lenten Supper. If you are willing to help, a sign up sheet has been posted on the bulletin board next to the Flower Chart.



Prayer to Begin Lent

"Lord, protect us in our struggle against evil. As we begin the discipline of Lent, make this season holy by our self-denial. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

Project Hope

The Theme for March is Can Meat and Treats for Easter Baskets.

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

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

We always need paper or plastic bags.



On Sunday, February 6th, Super Bowl Sunday, we collected \$383.00 and 91 items for the Lutheran Pantry during our Souper Bowl of Caring drive!
Thank You!

The Salvation Army 2011 D.J.'s Hero Scholarship Awards

The Salvation Army is looking for that unsund hero - maybe not the top student, but one who quietly carries out good deeds and has the respect of their peers. A person who give 100 percent when no one is looking.

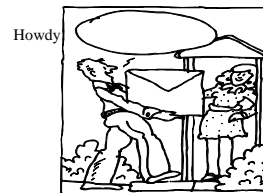
The Salvation Army is searching for students who emulate D.J. Sokol's characteristics and dedication to others. The D.J.'s Hero scholarship award recipients are about the same age as D.J. when he lost his battle with cancer at the age of 18.

Scholarship recipients will be recognized at the D.J.'s Hero Awards Luncheon on May 9, 2011. The nominator will also be our guest at one of Omaha's largest civic luncheons.

Nominations forms are available in the church office, you can download applications be visiting www.GiveSalvationArmy.org, or you can contact Patti at 402-898-5906 with any questions. All nominations must be postmarked by March 11, 2011.



Community News



Do you have high cholesterol or high blood pressure? Have members of your family suffered from these ailments? Do you have a poor diet? If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you may want to consider being screened for your risk of stroke through the services of Life Line Screening . Life Line Screening uses ultrasound technology to view the plaque build up in your carotid arteries, the main arteries that carry blood to the brain. Blockages in these arteries are a leading cause of stroke. Stroke is the #3 cause of death in US and **80%** of All Strokes CAN be Prevented. Life Line Screening will be providing their affordable, non-invasive, painless health screenings for the Community on **Monday, April 18, 2011 at Hanscom Park United Methodist**. Screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to: blocked arteries, which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms, which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries in the legs, which is a strong predictor of heart disease; and atrial fibrillation or irregular heart beat, which is closely tied to stroke risk. Register for the Stroke, Vascular Disease and Heart Rhythm Package for \$139. All four ultrasound screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. Your Health is in Your Hands, so call 1-888-653-6441 to pre-register. 8 - 10% of all screening results in ABNORMAL to CRITICAL Findings. The Screenings are Effective and are Saving Lives!!

Midwest Eye Care, P.C.

On Thursday, May 12, Midwest Eye Care, the UNMC Physicians department of Anesthesia, and Clarkson Family Practice will donate their services to provide cataract surgery at no charge to people in need as part of Mission Cataract USA.

Eligible candidates will be given a thorough eye exam and up to 25 people will be scheduled for free cataract surgery at Midwest Eye Surgery Center, at 4353 Dodge Street on May 12.

Please call 402-552-2020 by March 18 to speak with Sara Kruger, Mission Cataract Coordinator with any questions or to set up an examination.

Friendly Reminder!
it is now mandatory to
use the 10 digit phone
system in Omaha.



“Get Connected” A Cell Phone Class for Seniors

HEARTLAND
familyService
HOPE FOR FAMILIES

Have your cell phone questions answered regarding all brands and services at Heartland Family Service on Thursday, March 24 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This is a free one-on-one “coaching” sessions. Please call Karen at 402-553-5300 for reservations. Heartland is located at 2101 South 42nd Street.



To All Women in our Congregation!

We have an amazing opportunity for you to join
with us in serving our lord with ZEAL

On April 9, 2011, the Women of the Metro East Conference will gather at Kountze memorial Lutheran Church in Omaha for our Spring Gathering. Our theme for the day is "Serve With Zeal" and we have been planning "zealously" for a day of service and friendship.

During that day, we will be making kits for the Healthy Family Centers of Lutheran Family services and learning about the services of this Nebraska Synod agency. Each kit will begin with tying a fleece blanket, and everyone has the skills to do this. The blanket will then be wrapped around a collection of items needed for a child under the age of five. All of these kits will then be used in the Healthy Family centers where families come for help in learning skills to properly raise and nourish their children.

We will open with registration and coffee at 8:30 a.m. and our programming starts at 9:00 a.m. The day will close at 3:00 p.m. with devotions and a dedication of the kits. Registration is \$15.00 that includes lunch. This is a great opportunity to help provide needed items for the children served by LFS, a day for you to Serve with Zeal. The benefit for you is a day spent with friends, making new friends, visiting, laughing, hugging, enjoying the bonds of Christian togetherness and the opportunity to serve our Lord.

Metro East Conference

Saturday, April 9, 2011

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church

Omaha

Registration materials will be mailed. Plan now to attend.

Bring friends, sisters, aunts, neighbors, cousins - bring a whole van full.

We'll be there to welcome you!

Any additional questions or information please call Shirley Splittgerber, Conference Coordinator at 402-896-1787 or e-mail at shirley58@cox.net.

Wild Women Retreat

Jail Break

It's time to break free from your chains! We all have them. self-doubt. emotional burdens. chaos and stress. Through study, prayer, friendship and fun, the Wild Women Retreat will give you the tools you need to live a free life in Christ. Bring your friends for a weekend of relaxation, pampering and lots of laughs at this women-only retreat! Set Friday, March 11, through Sunday, March 13th as your retreat away. Held at the Swanson Center at Carol Joy Holling Center in Ashland, NE. Questions, call 1-888-656-6254 or www.caroljoyholling.org or the bulletin board in the Upper Fellowship Hall.

(Continued)

- “Immigrants are a drain on the economy.” The fact is that immigrants represent roughly \$2.8 trillion to U.S. taxpayers, who receive the benefit of their labor without the cost of their education. From 2000 to 2005, the availability of native-born, low-wage workers declined by approximately 1.8 million. (Randolph Capps, Karina Fortuny, Michael E. Fix. “Trends in the Low-wage Immigrant Labor Force, 2000-2005” Report Urban Institute, March 2007.)
- “Immigration leads to an increase in crime and violence.” Recent publications have articulated that crime rates are lowest in the states with the highest immigration growth rates. From 1999 to 2006, the total crime rate declined 13.6 percent in the 18 highest immigration states, compared to a 7.1 percent decline in the other 32 states. Research also shows that the incarceration rate for native-born men age 18 to 39 has been five times higher than the rate for immigrant men. (Ruben G. Rumbaut and Walter A. Ewing. “The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation: Incarceration Rates Among Native and Foreign-born Men, “Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, Spring 2007)

Any look at a solution will require consideration of how our economy will be impacted. According to a 2006 University of Nebraska-Omaha study, immigrant spending resulted in \$1.6 billion of economic output in Nebraska. This spending generated between 11,800 and 12,100 jobs. The state’s immigrant population contributed about \$154 million in the form of property, income, sales and gasoline tax revenues. The loss of this economic productivity and contribution to the state’s tax base would have negative impact on a state that is already struggling to fund much-needed services to the most vulnerable in our society. The financial effects of any solution will have real impact on the day-to-day lives of real people with real needs.

All efforts to attend to our current system that seems so broken must be comprehensive. Too often in our “soundbyte” society, we find persons offering solutions that appeal to an oversimplified effort at complex issues and promote personal agendas. We need to ask the question what is best for the public good? Any effort must go beyond simply addressing symptoms to actually proposing solutions. This also means seeing the larger picture which many times leads us to a federal understanding rather than a state-by-state effort. Attempts to fix the nation’s immigration system must be genuinely and sincerely aimed at promoting the best interest of all those involved. Lives are at stake.

We, as a people of faith, are called to be compassionate. We are different because of Jesus’ claim on our lives and therefore we address difficult challenges with a different understanding. We are concerned for those who are affected by any decision that is made. We ask the question: “Who is my neighbor?” We currently have a system that tears families apart, divides communities and seems to pit neighbor against neighbor. Is this consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ, our Savior?

We must work to maintain basic human rights as well as to keep families together. Our nation was founded on words like: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Our story as a people trails back to the stories of immigrant people moving in search of freedom, opportunity and safety. How can we be as accepting as our forefathers and foremothers were received? How will we be the church for others?

Again, this is a difficult, complex challenge. God cares how we respond for the sake of others. Pray for wisdom, insight and sensitivity for our society as we navigate these challenging opportunities. May God bless us and use us.



"A Safe Place to Talk About Hard Things"

Bishop Dave deFreese
Nebraska Synod, ELCA



"Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you and your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites, and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

Many people have asked how I understand the immigration proposals that are before our state legislature right now. Typically, I do not take public stands on legislative policy matters, but I would invite you to think with me on a situation that is both emotionally charged and politically challenging. The issues of immigration are tremendously complex and not easily resolved. We seem to be living with a broken system that is hurting people, raising fears and escalating a style of response that does not seem true to both our national heritage nor our faith understanding.

An ineffective immigration system speaks directly to our Christian calling to care for our neighbors and our own Lutheran heritage as immigrants. Again, I would invite you to think with me as we struggle with this current challenge. Rather than zero in on the specifics of any one piece of legislation, I offer some principles that hopefully we, as a people of faith, can use to measure any immigration policy and proposal... a filtering system that helps us seek the best way possible for us to live as God has called us to live together.

'Jesus says to the righteous on Judgment Day, 'when I was a stranger you welcomed me... whatsoever you do to the least of these, you do to me.' (Matthew 25:35 & 40)

Immigration is the story of our human race. The history of the world is a history of migration... people moving from place to place because of wars, famine, political unrest, poverty, and some not by their own choosing. Our scriptures are filled with the command to care for the stranger in our midst. The prophets spoke directly to God's desire that we be a different people in welcoming others: "Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who are thrust aside because they are sojourners." (Malachi 3:5.) One Hebrew Bible scholar has articulated that passages regarding the sojourner appears 50 times more than many of the other moral themes that are expounded today.

Jesus is quoted in three of the Gospels that inhospitality will not be tolerated and it is harsher for those who do not welcome the stranger than it was for Sodom.

The New Testament witness clarifies that the distinctions that so often divide human kind are radically changed and overcome by Jesus our Christ. Because God has welcomed us so graciously, we should share that welcome with others. "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28)

We also need to factor in what the reality of research has taught us. There are many different statements being bandied around in this current conversation that simply have no footing in factual reality. Economically, this is especially true. Let me share some of the things that I have heard that research will not back up:

- "Undocumented people do not pay taxes." This is not true as they pay sales tax and property tax, even through their rent. They also pay income tax when payroll is withheld. The Social Security Administration has stated that most undocumented immigrants pay federal, state, and local taxes including Medicare, and between \$6-7 billion in Social Security taxes that will never benefit them. Alan Greenspan has told Congress that immigrants are bailing out our Social Security system. Some experts believe that 15 percent of that which undergirds Social Security currently is through undocumented workers. The system would collapse without them.

(Continued on next page)

News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



- ♦ Thank you to everyone especially Larry Foreman (the abominable snow man) and Bob Moss who helped clear the snow from the walkways, etc.!
- ♦ Thank you to Jack Williams for his dedication in tending to the plants in the entry way, they continue to look welcoming.
- ♦ Thank you to Donna Adrian, Mary Laaker, Tom and Sarah Emery and Vicki Cox for their ongoing care in the nursery during Sunday morning worship service.
- ♦ Thank you to Bob Moss, Jerry Van Ormer, and Ernie Olson for their continuing efforts to “purge” out all the old stuff stored around the church.
- ♦ Thank you to LaVonne Moss, Norma Olson, June Hilmer, Eva Martin and Marilyn Van Ormer for their wonderful quilting work each Monday morning for Lutheran World Relief. The quilts are made out of old polyester clothing. The creations designed from those materials are truly works of art!



Bob Moss caught playing in the snow!



**World Day of Prayer
Friday, March 4, 2011**





Virginia McGill
Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

Amigos in Action/Interfaith Health Participant Excelling in High School

This month at Interfaith and with permission, I wanted to share the amazing news that Maria, one of our Latinas in Action and Amigos in Action participants recently shared with me. She has just finished her first semester of high school at South High School, has straight A grades, and is ranked #2 in her freshman class of 582 students! This WONDERFUL news deserves to be celebrated!!!!

Maria's mom, also a Latinas in Action participant, is extremely proud of Maria, and was thrilled to talk about her daughter. She is deservedly proud that Maria has made such an amazing start of her high school career. Both Maria and her mom credit Latinas in Action in helping Maria in staying active, making friends, boosting self-esteem, and forming relationships outside of the classroom.

Some background on Maria herself: Maria has been participating in Interfaith programs since she was 9 years old. She has missed only a handful of programs over those 7 years with nearly perfect attendance. I have been blessed in getting to know Maria, her brother, her mom and her dad during these years. I know Maria so well that even though she is not one to who enjoys the spotlight or talks about her many accomplishments, she agreed (with some persuasion) to be interviewed for our congregational newsletter.

Parts of our interview are below:

What are some interesting things about you?

Maria: To make it short, I like to read, write, play soccer, dance, talk to friends and baby-sit.

You like making things simple so you can avoid talking about yourself! I'll pry more: Are you proud of being the #2 student at South High School in the freshman class? Out of nearly 600 students!

Maria: Yes, I guess. I'm not sure why it doesn't seem like a big deal to me. You'd think I would be bragging about it, right?

I will brag for you and you know it! You have been attending our programs for the very beginning, I feel like I have watched you grow up! This summer, your mom and I had so many talks about how neither one of us could believe you were already beginning high school.....and now, this amazing achievement! What do you like about Latinas in Action?

Maria: Honestly, I like that you and Gema and the women who come to the program are interested in me and my life. My mom, of course, goes to every class all the time. I could stay at home, but I don't want to do that. I like the other teenagers and younger kids. I like our book club discussions. I love playing soccer in the summer, it's my favorite sport, and all the activities you think of for Amigos in Action are great. I also want to stay in shape and feel good. I love to dance and having other people to dance with is way more fun than working out by myself.

(Continued on next page)

Who is a memorable teacher for you and why:

My 7th grade Language Arts teacher, Ms. Beckwith. She has been a big inspiration to me. She changed me for the better and was the only teacher who showed interest in my future that year. She also got me involved with reading and writing, my two new favorite hobbies. And you know how much I like to read, you've given me books to read and you are one of the few adults who will ask me all kinds of questions about the books I read.

How much do you study?

Maria: Not all the time, actually, I have to let my brain take a breather. I have to review something at least twice and then it is stuck in my head.

What are your plans for the future following high school?

I'll go to college to study something in the medical field. Maybe practical nursing or maybe become a doctor. You have always promised to help me look at colleges when I'm ready!

Your brother is part of our group and also a dedicated student like you. What does he think of his sister's big news?

Maria: My brother gets good grades. He's very smart for his age. I think when he is my age he will be super smart, he'll outshine me, I think.

You are the oldest child in your family, how do you help in your home?

Maria: Well, honestly, I help a little in keeping the house clean and such. I help the most in encouraging my brother to do well in school and try to stay out of trouble to be an example to him.

What advice do you have for our younger Amigos in Action participants who will be entering high school this year, next year or in the future?

Maria: Do well your freshman year. It will reflect on all four years you are there. Try your best every day and ask for help if you don't understand something. The better grades in school you get, the better job you will get. Try to have fun and ignore drama.

Free Tax Preparation Available Right Now

The Walmart Foundation, United Way Worldwide, One Economy and the National Disability Institute have partnered to bring free tax preparation and filing services directly to consumers across the country. Through a \$4.2 million national grant from the Walmart Foundation, the partnership:

- ◆ Offers free tax preparation to eligible consumers at local community-based tax preparation sites and via MyFreeTaxes.com
- ◆ Provides education and filing for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income individuals and families;
- ◆ Allows for the expansion of disability-inclusive tax assistance programs, and;
- ◆ Provides eligibility information for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In addition five local community-based tax preparation sites are open across the Omaha area through April 18, 2011. IRS-trained volunteers are helping taxpayers who earn less than \$49,000 per year file their taxes free of charge. These local sites are supported by United Way of the Midlands and the Omaha Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition. At scheduled times, local banks and credit unions offer additional assistance to people who visit the sites. Residents can dial 2-1-1 to find a nearby tax site and hours of operation. (The sites and times are also available at uwmidlands.org.)



Special Days at Grace Lutheran Church

March 6 - Special Congregation Meeting.
 March 8 - Church Council Meeting.
 March 9 - Ash Wednesday Dinner and Lent Worship.
 March 12 - Time Change, Spring Ahead.
 March 16 - Dinner and Lent Worship.
 March 23 - Dinner and Lent Worship.
 March 30 - Dinner and Lent Worship.

Don't forget to set your clocks!

A little girl in Minneapolis came home from church with a frown. "I'm not going back there anymore," she announced, "I don't like the Bible they use in Sunday school."

"Why not?" her astonished mother asked.

"Because the Bible they use is always talking about St. Paul, and never mentions Minneapolis," she replied. —via *Gleanings*



A Dublin University student was hitchhiking on the side of an Irish country road on a very dark, stormy night. He could hardly see a few feet ahead of him. Suddenly, he saw a car slowly coming towards him and stopped. He got into the car and closed the door, only to realize there was no driver behind the wheel and the motor wasn't on.

The car mysteriously started moving slowly again, and the frightened student started to pray, begging for his life.

He saw the lights of a pub around a curve, jumped out of the car, ran to the pub, and started telling everybody about the terrible experience he had just had.

Suddenly, the door opened, and two other people walked in, both soaked and out of breath. Looking around, they saw the student sobbing at the bar.

"Look, Patrick," one said to the other, "there's that silly fellow who got in the car while we were pushing it."



Bible Wordsearch

Wordsearch 186

Hebrews 12:18-24

The Two Mountains

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

ANGELS	MOSES
BEGGED	NAMES
BLOOD	PERFECT
BURNING	SIGHT
CHURCH	SPIRITS
GLOOM	SPOKEN
GOD	STONED
HEAVEN	STORM
JESUS	TOUCHES
JOYFUL	TRUMPET
JUDGE	WRITTEN
LIVING	ZION

ASSEMBLY
TERRIFYING
TREMBLING
RIGHTEOUS
MOUNTAIN
MEDIATOR
JERUSALEM
COVENANT
DARKNESS
FIRSTBORN

After you find all the hidden words the left over letters spell out a Bible verse reading from the top left to the bottom right

MORE PUZZLES AT:
<http://biblewordgames.com>

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Quotefall puzzle solving instructions

Find the common two and three letter words first. Do the columns with all the same letters if there are any. Try the new puzzle below and let me know what you think.

QUOTEFALL 46 

T	O		H	O	V	R	S	N	A	T	H	S	L	M	P	P	F	D
M	T		S	A	U	P		P	O	T	V	S		I	Y	L	D	E
E	Y		Y	T	E	E			H	A		E		H	E		E	

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