

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 - Colleen Jeffrey

Sexton - Nenchi Ilka

Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill

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

March

2012



THE
GRACE
MESSENGER



2012 Council Members

John Boato
Vicki Cox
Sarah Emery
Ralph Fitle
June Hilmer

David Hufford
Greg Hula
Carolyn Matson
Samantha Trejo
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 February 14th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We welcomed new members to the council. We pray for the healing of those close to us; Ralph's co-worker Randy Haney as he awaits a liver transplant, Ken Hilmer and his continued health struggles, Bobby Heesacker as he struggles with keeping insurance in order, the family of David's neighbor, Ferne Whittig, as they mourn her passing. We pray for peace & stabilization in areas of unrest; Syria, Egypt, Iran, North Korea, etc. We celebrate with and praise God for the births & new beginnings for the family of Amanda Vazquez and the family of Janet's nephew Jake & his wife Kelly. We remember that today is Valentine's Day, and pray for anyone feeling a loss, or feeling lonely.

Pastor led devotions from Deuteronomy 4.10 and 2 Timothy 2.15. Both encourage us to work on our relationship with God and with one another.

Visions for Ministry: The Council began reading a new book. We discussed how to really think about what our focus is, and ought to be. We will read Chapter one for our next meeting.

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

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: We have been approved to be Lutheran Volunteer Corp partners with Immanuel Lutheran in Benson.

Finance: Margie Sutej has requested we find someone else as Treasurer. We are grateful for her years of service. Talked about the issues surrounding paying for roof repair. Pastor spoke about the possibility of shopping for a new Insurance provider.

Property: Spoke about the roof issues and the 3 new stoves that were installed in the basement kitchen.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

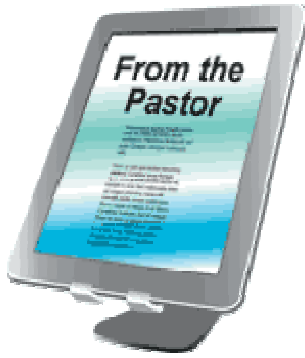
Support/Stewardship: No new report.

Worship: Spoke about Lenten services and continuing the Holden Evening Prayer format. Spoke about the Easter Service, and determined to have one service only. Easter Service will be held at 7 a.m. ONLY, and will be followed with breakfast as usual this year.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: No new report.

Announcements: Pastor will be in D.C. from 3/6 – 3/9 at a training seminar, as well as lobbying for Palestinian & Israeli issues. Pastor also spoke about the fact that his name has been submitted for consideration of the position of Bishop of the Nebraska Synod. This position would begin September 1, 2012. Vicki will bring treats for our March meeting.



You may recall that last month, I shared that I had begun reading a new book I picked up at our Theological Conference last October. The name of the book is "The Future Starts Now." It is a collection of ideas from a variety of authors who are part of an organization, A Renewal Enterprise.

I do like the questions this new author raises: What difference did I make in the world today? Did I make a contribution to something or somebody else? How am I being useful to God? These are marvelous questions that can help me and hopefully all of us to keep our focus on the most helpful way of being a disciple of Jesus.

On Ash Wednesday, I shared the following. This book that suggests that the way we might approach this time as the church is to be brave enough to ask the right questions, to listen for what God is saying, and to step into the future, confident in God's promise and power. The church needs to stop fighting over things that don't matter and clinging to structures that don't work anymore. The church needs to be ready to follow wherever God leads next.

To that end, the authors suggest three principles: Be who you are; See what you have; and Do what matters.

The first principle: be who you are. I shared a story about a pastor and congregation who were perceived as imperfect and undesirable. However, together they were learning some important things: They were discovering how to be who they are and see what they have for the sake of doing what matters. So, they are doing whatever they can with whatever they've got to be useful to God. They have come to believe that, no matter what anybody else thinks or says, there is an extraordinary power at work within them. And they seem committed to putting that power to good use no matter what tomorrow holds.

The second principle: see what you have. I shared the story about Jesus' call to the fishermen. These disciples were challenged to use their skills as fishermen to fish for people. Other disciples, such as Matthew, were called to use their skills for the kingdom. The point is, when Jesus invites you to follow him, he invites you to be who you are and see what you have for the sake of doing what matters to God. There is nothing you need to be, earn, buy, build or acquire in order to be useful to God. There is no need for fear, embarrassment, anxiety or shame. You can't be too old or too young, too rich or too poor. There is no such thing as inadequate. Jesus sees you, knows you, calls you, and is setting you free to put exactly who you are and what you have into the service of God's loving mission.

The third principle: do what matters. People today don't want to be told what to do, especially if they haven't been asked for their input. People want their time to count. They want to be taken seriously. They want their passions to be put to good use. So, maybe what matters is participating in our community organizing group, Omaha Together One Community, as it seeks to bring about more humane treatment of immigrants, pregnant women and tenants in rental properties. Maybe what matters is taking the risk of asking that checkout clerk, who seems so busy and burdened, how you can ask God to bless them today.

May God help us be the best we can be, recognize the gifts we have to be a blessing to others and do the things that really matter.

Pr. Damon Laaker



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

2 Corinthians 9:8

- ◆ Thank you to Marilyn and Jerry Van Ormer, and Ernie Olson for their 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, Arlone Farber 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 maintain the church with any projects that need to be completed.
- ◆ Thank you to Marilyn, LaVonne, June, and Eva, with your dedication in quilting for the Lutheran World Relief.
- ◆ Thank you to Nenchi Ilka, you are doing such a great job cleaning the church building!
- ◆ Thank you to Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer, Joe Narducci, Greg and Janet Hula, and Eva Martin who pick up altar flowers every Sunday morning.
- ◆ Thank you to Ron and Donna Adrian, and Brenda Spahr who take care of the altar, set up and take down communion.
- ◆ Thank you to the Newsletter Assembly Committee (LaVonne, Bob, Marilyn, Jerry, June, Eva, Gloria, Louise, and Ernie who dedicate one morning every month to prepare the Newsletter for mailings.
- ◆ Thank you to the snow removal gang, Larry Foreman, Bob Moss, and Pastor Laaker.

News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



Amanda and Juan Vazquez are the proud parents of a new son, Jackson Gabriel made his appearance on February 10, 2012!

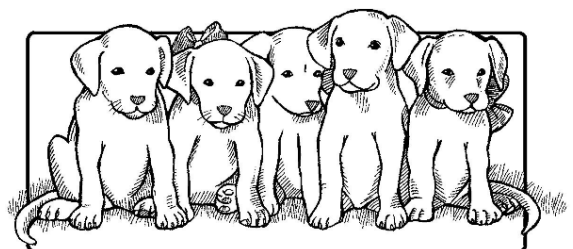
Congratulations to Juan, Amanda and big brother Jaydn!

God's kids say the funniest things:

"Dear God. Thank you for the baby brother but what I prayed for was a puppy."

—Sue, 6

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Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

*"We always thank God for all of you and continually
mention you in our prayers. "*

1 Thessalonians 1:2

Those we pray for named below are members unless otherwise specified:

- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found.
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ La Vonne Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Jack Williams - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Rose Heesacker - Ongoing cancer treatments. (June Hilmer's sister.)
- ◆ Rex Olson - Ongoing cancer treatments. (Don Olson's brother.)
- ◆ Wanda Black - Ongoing health issues. (Ernie Olson's Aunt.)
- ◆ Pastor Judy Gifford - Ongoing cancer treatment. (Assistant to the Bishop.)
- ◆ Norma Courtney - Ongoing health issues. (Arlone Farber's Mom.)
- ◆ Mary Jane King - Ongoing health issues. (Donna Adrian's Mom.)
- ◆ Jean Matson - Spiritual healing during cancer treatments. (Andrea Spahr's Grandma.)
- ◆ Mike Novak - Ongoing cancer treatment. (Dorothy Novak's son.)
- ◆ Sharon Bishop - Spiritual healing during cancer treatments. (Friend of Dorothy Novak.)
- ◆ Jeff Van Overen - Healing during cancer treatments. (Friend of many.)
- ◆ The family of Thom Kona. (Family and friend within the Sudanese ministry.)

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Mae Lane - St Joe Villa.

Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn.

Barbara Narducci - Home

Jack Williams - Immanuel Village.

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. 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.*





Quilting for Lutheran World Relief on Mondays at 9:00 a.m.

If you have the morning free, drop by and help cut squares and tie quilt tops on to the backs.

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

← Take a look at the current Quilting Joker!



**Prayer Meetings will
start again after the
Season of Lent.**



*Women of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

Lutheran Women of Omaha
will meet March 13, 2012
for a 12:00 Luncheon at
Immanuel Lutheran Church
2725 North 60th Avenue
(60th and Maple)

Program: Kids Against Hunger

Project: Kids Against Hunger

Reservations By: March 11, 2012
To

Mardelle Gocek - 402-292-1328
Luncheon: \$6.00 COME JOIN US



On Sunday, February 5th, Super Bowl Sunday,
Due to the weather, we extended the opportunity
to donate on February 12th
we collected \$456.08 and 30 items for the
Lutheran Pantry during our
Souper Bowl of Caring Drive!
Thank You!

Pray for all world leaders, especially
those in war-torn countries, as they
consider decisions that will affect
God's people and creation.

**World Day of Prayer
Friday, March 2, 2012**



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service



PROJECT

Highlighted items below are
in constant need.

HOPE

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

Deodorant	Dish soap
Can Openers	Toothbrush and toothpaste
Shaving Cream	Mouthwash (without alcohol)
Razors	Feminine hygiene products
Kleenex	Hair products (combs, brushes, picks)
Bar Soap	Dry Laundry Soap
Bathroom tissue	Shampoo
Diaper wipes	
Diapers, especially sizes 4, 5, 6 and pullups	

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

We always need paper or plastic bags.

2012 Feinstein Challenge

Alan Shawn Feinstein has, for the past 14 years, provided one million dollars of his money to anti-hunger agencies throughout the country. Every year Mr. Feinstein challenges these agencies to raise funds and food from March 1st to April 30th. The more money and food collected, the more of Mr. Feinstein's one million dollars will be received.

At Project Hope we are grateful for all the donations congregations in Omaha have shared with us in the past. Once again, we have a unique opportunity to get supplemental funds for all contributions during March and April. We would use this money only for buying food. The Lutheran church and community response in 2011 was incredible with helping us meet and exceed our goal of \$54,000. We raised \$54,270.00 with food and money. We will get \$1.00 credit for each food item donated and \$1.00 credit for every dollar donated. This would be an ideal mission opportunity during the Lenten season. Would your congregation please consider joining us in this Challenge by collecting food items or receiving a special offering?



Virginia McGill, MA
Executive Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

Spotlight on Amigos in Action Participant

This month, Interfaith Health Service and Families in Action are featuring Stephanie, a six year old Amigos in Action participant. Stephanie, her mom and brothers have been participating in Families in Action for two years. I first met Stephanie's grandmother, Karina, at Columbus Park on a Sunday afternoon a few years ago. Karina was in town helping care for Stephanie because Stephanie was a new sister to two bubbly and very active twin brothers. I shared with Karina some of the programs that comprise Families in Action and extended an invitation to her and her extended family to join us. Karina did so with Stephanie, and soon Stephanie and her mom and brothers and entire family began attending regularly.

It has been a true blessing to watch Stephanie and her brothers grow over the years. Stephanie has an infectious smile, an outgoing, warm and friendly personality, and she is much loved by all of our Amigos in Action participants, staff and families.

Below are some highlights of our conversation with Stephanie:

School: Spring Lake Magnet

Favorite Classes: Music, Art, Computers

Favorite Color: "Of course, my favorite color is blue because I always draw with it."

Favorite Things/people: "My grandparents. My neighbor's puppy."

Favorite things about Families in Action: "Making crafts, talking to Miss Virginia, playing with the other kids."

What will you do when you grow up? "I may be a doctor because my dad told me I would be good at taking care of others when I grow up. I told him that is not my job!!! So I may be a doctor but I may be an animal doctor."

Stephanie on life:

"Miss Virginia, maybe you can ask me what I like to do. Because I like to play, of course, with friends. My friends have a swing and a trampoline."

"For my birthday, in case you can come to my house again this year, I like handmade cards. And drums. And I like to sing."

"I went to the dentist this week. I didn't have any cavities. When Families in Action gave out toothbrushes, I picked a pretty pink one!"

"I like my brothers, but sometimes they cry a lot."

"My mom and dad work very hard to take care of me and my brothers."

We appreciate your support and prayers as you continue to lift up Stephanie and all of our Families in Action participants, staff and partners during this Lenten Season.

Community News

The Salvation Army 2012 D.J.'s Hero Scholarship Awards

The Salvation Army is looking for that unsung 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 14, 2012. 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 by visiting www.GiveSalvationArmy.org, or you can contact Patti at 402-898-5906 with any questions. All nominations must be postmarked by March 9, 2012.

Midwest Eye Care, P.C.

On Thursday, May 17, Midwest Eye Care, 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 17.

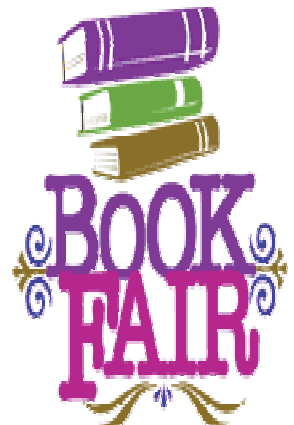
Please call 402-552-2020 by March 19 to speak with Jennifer Anderson, Mission Cataract Coordinator with any questions or to set up an examination.

Donate your used books

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

A sale table has been set up in the Upper Fellowship Hall. 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!





One Another for ELCA Hunger

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

In Nebraska, we understand as well as anyone in the U.S. – perhaps the world – the important relationship between the precious earth and resources God has blessed us with and our ability to feed and nourish ourselves. We understand what it means to be part of a community that looks out for one another.

Hunger is present in developing countries and here at home. It happens in both urban and rural settings. In short, hunger affects people everywhere, across the world, across the country and across the street.

Consider the following:

- One out of every seven people on the planet suffers from hunger and poverty.
- One out of every six people lack safe drinking water.
- Every 5.4 seconds, a child dies from a preventable disease related to malnutrition.
- In the U.S., about 11 percent of the population deals with hunger on a daily basis.
- The number of households requesting emergency food assistance is on the rise, with almost half coming from families with children.

Here in the nation’s bread basket, we believe that we can feed the world. So let’s do it.

One Another for ELCA World Hunger is a joint justice/giving campaign authorized by the Nebraska Synod Council and aimed at engaging local mission centers in discussion about the poverty and hunger in our midst and how we can respond as the church.

Eighty percent of giving to One Another will go directly to ELCA World Hunger. In addition to direct food aid, ELCA World Hunger works to help develop hunger-relief solutions through programs that address economic sustainability, housing, job training, sanitation. ELCA World Hunger acts consistently with the great Lutheran tradition of looking for solutions that will address people’s needs well beyond today and tomorrow.

The remaining 20 percent of giving to One Another will stay in the Nebraska Synod to help support and undergird local hunger-relief efforts that are affiliated with the Synod and its mission centers, such as food pantries and job skills ministries.

What Can I Do?

We can’t address hunger and poverty if we don’t understand the nature and scope of the problem. By engaging each other in conversation, we hope that there will be a healthy sharing of knowledge and experiences that will help create a greater understanding of the root causes of hunger and our calling as Christ’s disciples to address these issues in our world and communities.

As part of One Another, each mission center will receive educational materials intended to encourage reflection and discussion about hunger and poverty and our role as the church in addressing the issues involved. These materials are excellent resources for worship, adult discussions, Sunday school classes, open forums, etc.

Continued.....

Wednesdays	Host/Hostess	Benefit for	Speaker
March 7, 2012	Loren and Marsh Moyer and Donna Hazelhurst		Rev. Bob Bryan Pastor, Followers of Christ Prison Ministry
March 14, 2012	Mary Laaker, Vicki Cox, and Arlone Farber	Backpack Program	Vicar John Badeng Nile Sudanese Ministry
March 21, 2012	Tom and Sarah Emery		Brad Brake Lutheran Volunteer Corps
March 28, 2012	OPEN		Francine Wise Lutheran Metro Ministry
Maundy Thursday April 5, 2012	Greg and Janet Hula		Service of Communion and Stripping the Altar



**Volunteers are Needed to Serve and Prepare
One Lenten Dinner Open**

There is only one Wednesday evening Lenten Dinner that remains open. If you are willing to help, a sign up sheet has been posted on the bulletin board next to the Flower Chart.

Palm Sunday, April 1
9:00 a.m. Adult Sunday School.
10:30 Palm Sunday Worship Service.

Maundy Thursday, April 5
6:00 p.m. Lenten Supper.
7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service.

Easter, April 8

Only one
Easter Sunrise Service
This year service will
be at 7:00 a.m.

There will be no
10:30 a.m. service.



Good Friday, April 6
No Supper.
7:00 p.m. Good Friday Service.



Easter Breakfast
8:00 a.m.
Served by the Moyer family.

Continued...

One Another will challenge all of us to step up and make our calling to care for the hungry and the poor a part of our faith journey. Several ways to show our love and concern for one another will be offered, such as:

- Take **ONE** weekend and devote it to discussing hunger and poverty through the worship service, Sunday School lessons and forums.
- Develop **ONE** new way in which your mission center can reach out to those who suffer from hunger and poverty.
- Designate **ONE** person at your mission center who will advocate for the hungry and the impoverished.
- As a consumer, give **ONE** percent of your annual spending for groceries or dining out to ELCA World Hunger to support their efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty at home and abroad.
- As a food producer, give **ONE** percent of your annual yield to ELCA World Hunger to support their efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty at home and abroad.
- Pray **ONE** minute a week for those who suffer from hunger and poverty.
- Fast for **ONE** day to stand with those who suffer from hunger and poverty.
- Send **ONE** letter or e-mail to a decision maker who can help improve the lives of those who suffer from hunger or poverty.

Our Goals

The Nebraska Synod has a long history of supporting ELCA World Hunger through our financial gifts. This year, we are asking mission centers and individuals to prayerfully consider increasing their giving with the goal of raising \$300,000 this fiscal year.

The Nebraska Synod is working to create new ministries for our definitely-abled brothers and sisters in Christ.

This is a group that has been largely underserved and under-reached by the church throughout the ages. The goal is to change this trend by making a concerted effort, not just to serve them, but also to empower our definitely-abled brothers and sisters to lives of ministry and service.

On April 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., a large gathering will be held to meet our definitely-abled brothers and sisters in Christ. The event will be held at First Lutheran Church in Lincoln (1551 S. 70th St.). The event will focus on youth and young adults; people between middle school age and 30. Participants will worship, talk, serve and share fellowship.

For more information, contact [Lisa Kramme](#) at the Synod office, at 402-896-5311.





Special Days in March at Grace Lutheran Church

- March 2 - World Day of Prayer.
- March 7 - Lenten Dinner & Service.
- March 11 - Daylight Savings Time Begins.
- March 13 - Council Meeting.
- March 14 - Lenten Dinner & Service.
- March 14 - Photographers Club.
- March 15 - Neighborhood Meeting.
- March 21 - Lenten Dinner & Service.
- March 28 - Lenten Dinner & Service.
- March 28 - Photographers Club.



March 11, 2012



A successful businessman had one very bad habit. He'd come home very drunk. His family tried everything, including Alcoholics Anonymous. Nothing worked.

Finally, his two sons decided they'd have to do something outrageous to scare their dad into sobriety. So one night when their dad came home drunk and fell flat on the floor, the sons went to work.

They put their dad in the car and drove to a cemetery. They dug a post-hole type grave and put their dad in it – upright so only his head was sticking out. They figured that when their dad woke up and saw where he was, he would be so scared out of his wits that he would stop drinking.

Hours later, when their dad woke up, the sun was shining brightly, the birds were singing, and it looked like a beautiful day. The dad slowly looked all around, and seeing all the tombstones around him, exclaimed, “Well, what do you know, it's resurrection morning, and I'm the first one up.”

—Pastor Don Hoffman
St. John's Lutheran Church, Lena, IL
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Bible Wordsearch

Wordsearch 198

Rev. Chapter 4

John's Vision

F	R	Y	H	E	A	V	E	N	N	Y	S	E	P	D
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BLAZING	ALMIGHTY
CLEAR	CREATURE
CROWNS	DRESSED
CRYSTAL	EMERALD
EAGLE	ENCIRCLED
ELDERS	FLASHES
EYES	HEAVEN
FLYING	LIGHTNING
GLORY	RAINBOW
GOLD	RECEIVE
HEADS	SEATED
HOLY	SPIRITS
JASPER	THRONE
LAMPS	THUNDER
LION	VOICE
LIVING	WHITE
OPEN	WINGS
PEALS	WORSHIP
POWER	WORTHY

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

Psalm 78

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

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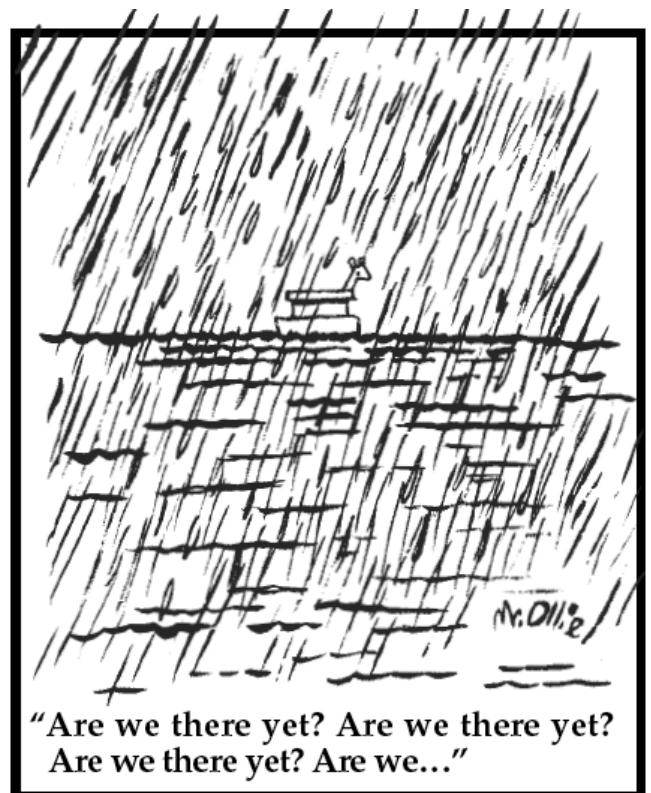
The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a church elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. A teacher had written a note, posted on the apple tray:

"Take only ONE. God is watching."

At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had written a note:

"Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

—via Bart VanGiesen,
Texas Township, MI
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