

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
1326 South 26 Street
Omaha, NE 68105-2380
(402) 341-7730

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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
Editor/Church Secretary – Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Nenchi Ilka
Families In Action - Virginia McGill

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



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY,
AMERICA!**

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:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on June 12th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us; Greg's friend, Rudy Horwath as he continues in rehab from a hip replacement, Ralph's co-worker Randy Haney as he continues to recover from transplant surgery. We pray for the healing of Ken Hilmer as he consults with Doctors about his back, for Dorothy Novak with her health issues and her son Michael with cancer issues. We pray for peace & stabilization in areas of unrest; as well as healing for all those struggling with natural disasters. We pray for all those that begin to think about summer vacation travel. We pray for our shut-ins, for Jack Williams & Gertrude Hufford, and for our new Bishop and all of the reorganization surrounding that transition. We ask God to keep Rebecca Fitle in his care as she spends the next 3 months in Mexico City. We await the birth of Greg & Janet's newest grandchild with joy, and pray for the baby's maternal grandmother, Lucy Rodriguez, as she goes through an operation on her brain.

Pastor led devotions from Genesis 3:9-10 and Mark 2:17. They speak to us about how God has come to seek us out, whether we are looking or not.

Visions for Ministry: The Council continued reading Missional Renaissance. We discussed how to live our life as a follower of Jesus, wherever we are / whatever we are doing...we ARE the church. We desire to touch the lives of others. Please read Chapter Four for our next meeting.

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

Christian Education: VBS is coming along. Planning for approximately 40 children. Meetings will be each Thursday night at 6 p.m. Please plan to attend if you are willing to share your time and energy!

Evangelism/Outreach: The placement of our Lutheran Service Corp volunteer has been completed. Matthew Kong will be with us, sharing his time with the NE Synod Justice team.

Finance: We submitted a request for health reimbursement from the IRS, and have received it. The council decided on the Brotherhood Mutual policy for insurance, based on the meeting on 6/3.

Property: We have signed contracts for the roof replacement, both the main area and the flat part. Work will begin on 6/18.

Service/Social Ministry: Saturday, Greg offered his time to help paint at Project Hope. Thanks Greg!

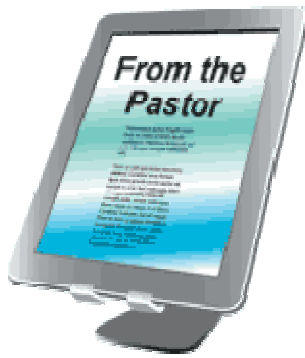
Support/Stewardship: No new report.

Worship: No new report.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: No new report.

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



Many of you know that I was one of the fourteen candidates that stood for election as Bishop of the Nebraska Synod. What you were not privileged to hear was what I was asked to share on the night before the Assembly began. Each candidate was asked to share a personal experience that has reaffirmed your sense of call.

This is the content of what I shared that evening. I hope it gives you some understanding of my life journey that has led me to serve as pastor.

My sense of call begins with a mother's prayer who was childless for six years. "Lord, you give me a son, I will give him back." I am that son. I have sensed this call to be a servant of Christ as long as I can remember. My father was a farmer who had multiple health issues. He needed many others to help him out in many situations. In return, whenever someone else needed help, my father was quick to be one of the first in line. He demonstrated a servant's heart and I believe instilled the same to me.

My sense of call to do the Lord's work has remained firm despite my father's bad health, his death, the breakup of the Seminary I intended to attend, the lack of a guaranteed call upon graduation from seminary, the limited opportunities for approval within the Lutheran Church in America. I was also told that I would not be able to serve in the congregation where I was to get my second internship training. God did not let any of these things get in the way of calling me to serve.

Much of my ordained ministry has had parallels to the Biblical stories of Abraham, being led into places unknown, Jacob, wrestling with God, Jonah, seeking to run away from difficult situations and Samuel, being called to listen to God speak. God has led me into places and relationships that I could never have imagined. For example, serving the Omaha Police Department as a Chaplain for the last 29+ years.

Twelve years ago, the Spirit of God let me know in advance of Bishop David deFreese's call to serve the Nebraska Synod that God wanted me to work in this ministry. My call as Assistant to the Bishop and director of Lutheran Metro has allowed me the privilege to experience the Spirit's work in ecumenical relationships, advocacy for and on behalf of others, persons in poverty and immigrants and refugees.

In recent years, I have felt that Spirit of God very clearly in my work with our Sudanese refugees. Three years ago, I invited an Episcopal priest from Africa to come and work with our refugees. He arrived and did some amazing work with many who attended the three day experience. Upon his leaving, he said to me, "Damon, I have seen in you the heart of a servant of God. God is preparing you for something more. Be open to the Spirit."

I hope this gives you a little more insight into my understanding of God's work in my life.

Pr. Damon Laaker

A local independent church had a small building in the middle of the town block. The Methodists erected a church directly south of them, and the Baptists built a building directly north of them.

The independent church put up a new sign outside their church: "Main Entrance!"

—via George Goldtrap, Ormond-by-the-Sea, FL
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Prayer Vigil

Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

"Give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day."

1 Kings 8:28

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

- ◆ Louise Alsager - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found.
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ferne Matson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ La Vonne Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Don Olson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Jerry Van Ormer - recovery from a fall.
- ◆ 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. (Don Olson's sister.)
- ◆ 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 - Ongoing health issues. (Andrea Spahr's Grandma.)
- ◆ Mike Novak - Ongoing cancer treatment. (Dorothy Novak's son.)
- ◆ Jeff Van Overen - Ongoing cancer treatments. (Friend of many.)

Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Gertrude Hufford - Immanuel Village.

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.





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

2 Corinthians 9:8

- ◆ Thank you to Marilyn and Jerry Van Ormer for their dedication in tending to the plants in the entry way, they continue to look welcoming.
- ◆ Thank you to Mary Laaker, Tom and Sarah Emery, for their ongoing care in the nursery during Sunday morning worship service.
- ◆ Thank you to Bob Moss and Jerry Van Ormer for their continuing efforts to maintain the church with any projects that need to be completed.
- ◆ 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 lawn care crew, Bob Moss and Jerry Van Ormer, for your weekly dedication, the yard looks very inviting within the neighborhood community.
- ◆ Thank you to David Hufford, Ralph Fitle, and Carolyn Matson, and all their helpers for planning, organizing and leading this summer's Vacation Bible School!

The 5 Fingers of Prayer

Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C.S. Lewis once said, a "sweet duty."

The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.

The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance.

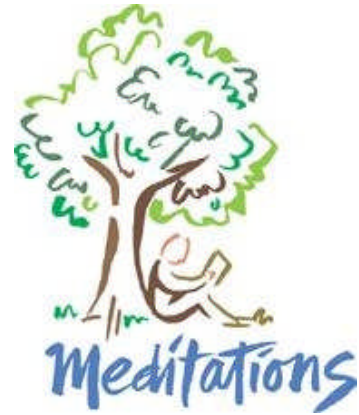
The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger; as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest finger of all. Which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

www.godisgroovy.com



Wednesday Night
July 11, 2012
7:00 p.m.
Candle light Prayer Service
for Confession,
Meditation and Healing
at Grace Lutheran Church.
People of all faiths are welcome!



Thrivent Members Family Fun Day
At Eugene T. Mahoney State Park
Save The Date!
Sunday, August 19th

Entertainment by the Balloon Brigade!

Park Admission, Activities, Lunch and drinks as well as free prizes provided for all kids. Additional information will be ready and posted in the August newsletter. Any questions, please contact Nancy Hornig at 402-571-1603.



A parts manager for a small electronics shop, had occasion to order part No. 669 from the factory. But when he received it he noticed that someone had sent part No. 699 instead.

Furious at the factory's incompetence, he promptly sent the part back along with a letter giving them a piece of his mind.

Less than a week later, he received the same part back with a letter containing just four words: "TURN THE PART OVER."

From the "Good Clean Funnies" website.

"Witnessing the Republicans and the Democrats bicker over the U.S. debt is like watching two drunks argue over a bar bill on the Titanic."

—via George Goldtrap, Ormond-by-the-Sea, FL
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Annual Quilt Auction

Camp Carol Joy Holling
Conference Center
Ashland NE
July 28, 2012

Lots of good food,
great fun, and beautiful quilts.

Schedule

9:00 a.m. Quilts on Display
10:00 a.m. Auction begins.
9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Silent Auction
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. BBQ Lunch
Adults \$6, Kids \$3

Bus tours and hayrack rides
will be available all day.
The pool will be open from noon - 5:00 p.m.

A special thanks to Thrivent Financial for
Lutherans Chapters across Nebraska for
sponsorship of the Quilt Auction.



Join us for

Summer Vacation Bible School

Sunday, July 15 – Thursday, July 19, 2012

6:00 pm – 8:15 pm

Grace Lutheran Church

1326 So. 26 St. Omaha NE 68105

402-341-7730

Ages 4 years through 6th grade

All ages are welcome! Come as a family!

Preschool children should be accompanied by an adult.

If possible, please drop off the completed registration form to the church office *before* our VBS event.

Otherwise, bring it with you on July 15th.

Vacation Bible School Registration

One form per student please.

Student's name _____

Student's date of birth _____

Address _____

Age _____ Grade (entering Fall 2012) _____ Boy Girl

Known allergies or medical concerns _____

Parent/Guardian's name(s) _____

Phone number(s) to reach parent during VBS _____

Emergency contact other than above _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Health care telephone _____

Brothers and Sisters (names and ages) _____

_____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

_____ Age _____

For office use only: VBS 2012 attendance record

Group _____ Leader _____

Days attended M T W TH F



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

Special Pantry Needs for July:
Cereal and Crackers



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.

Project Hope also has a Clothing Room and is in need of all sizes of clothing, Especially spring and summer clothing.



This Too Shall Pass

*If I can endure for this minute
Whatever is happening to me,
No matter how heavy my heart is
Or how dark the moment may be-
If I can remain calm and quiet
With all the world crashing about me,
Secure in the knowledge God loves me
When everyone else seems to doubt me-
If I can but keep on believing
What I know in my heart to be true,*

*That darkness will fade with the morning
And that this will pass away, too-
Then nothing in life can defeat me
For as long as this knowledge remains
I can suffer whatever is happening
For I know God will break all of the chains
That are binding me tight in the darkness
And trying to fill me with fear-
For there is no night without dawning
And I know that my morning is near.*

Helen Steiner Rice

Kids At Work 2012



It is the beginning of July, the summer program is already half over. Kids At Work Participants have been busy; the youth continue in their efforts with interaction projects at the Lutheran Home, which has included baking cookies.

At Precious Memories the youth entertain the toddlers and young children, and also give a welcome relief moment or two to the adult caregivers.

On the first work day, a team of strong boys worked very hard in assisting of the removal of shelving and non-perishable items from Cristo Rey. Cristo Rey is no longer the South Omaha food pantry site and a new location is needed.

Kids At Work has begun a new partnership with Keep Omaha Beautiful. One day a week a team walks down to Columbus Park at 24th and Woolworth and picks up litter found in the park. The team will also remove litter between Grace Lutheran and Columbus Park. During their trips they have encountered passerbys who have stopped with questions asking "what are you doing", etc. After hearing the responses from the team leader (Sam) they have expressed appreciation that this is being done. One day at the park a baseball was found, that has been the treasure so far this summer.

Here at Grace teams have pulled weeds in the new mulch areas, swept the parking lot (wind and rain has a tendency to blow mulch around), and they have washed toys in both nursery rooms. Gloria Moore leads a team once a week, starting June 19th, in assembling crocheted squares into hats which will be placed on the mitten tree later this year. In just one week they have completed six hats!

The youth continue their summer experience in serving one another.

Brenda Spahr, Director
Kids At Work

Congratulations!

Angela and Benhi !Khabeb became the proud parents of a daughter,
Khonni Malieka, born on May 14th.
What a blessing she is to the !Khabeb family.
Our prayers and well wishes are with you!



The 2012 Summer Build season for Neighbors South - Habitat for Humanity. We are graced with a great site at 2460 South 19th Street, where we will be building a five bedroom home for Abdisalam and Isnino and their three children. Abdisalam and Isnino have come to Omaha from Somalia. The Build will begin June 15.

When Abdisalam and Isnino were living in Somalia, their country was in the midst of a brutal civil war. They tried to shelter their family from the destruction and violence, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to raise their children in such an environment. Abdi and Isnino decided to make arrangements to come to the United States, but there were severe military restrictions that kept

Abdi from being able to leave with his family.

In 2006, Isnino and the children made the lengthy passage from Somalia to Virginia, and then to Omaha soon thereafter. Lutheran Family Services assisted her in securing a small apartment and a full-time job at Tyson Foods. Several years later Abdi was reunited with Isnino and the kids. Once the family was complete again, they wasted no time in applying for Habitat Omaha's program.

Although they had helped other families build houses in Somalia, Abdi and Isnino say that they have had an entirely different experience while working their Sweat Equity. "The houses we built were made of bricks and mud, and had steel roofs. We had never done framing or dry wall before, but we learned how to use new materials to build Habitat houses with the other families. We think this experience has been very good for our kids because they have a chance to learn, too."

Before long, Abdi and Isnino will be working on their own house with the Neighbor's South coalition. When they complete their hours, they will purchase their house through a no-interest loan at full-price and move into their new five bedroom home. Isnino says that the independence and freedom will allow the whole family to live comfortably. With more room to study, she will be empowered to complete her G.E.D. and begin studying to become a seamstress.

If you are interested in volunteering with this summer's build, there are forms on the table at the back of the sanctuary, or you can call the church office at 402-341-7730 for a form.

The summer build project for the Neighbors South Coalition began on June 15th 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, service, and cleanup. There are two shifts per day. The morning shift is from 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. with a snack and lunch provided. The afternoon shift is from 12:30 - 5:00 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 402-341-7730.

This year's building site is located at 2460 South 19th Street.



Wednesday, July 11

7:00 pm

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

13271 Millard Ave

Omaha, NE

(402) 895 - 3366



You are invited to join us for an
unforgettable experience!



This is a free concert that will lift the spirit of people at any age. There is a free will offering that takes place toward the end of the concert to support the choir and many other projects in Africa.

The African Childrens Choir has been working with Africa's most vulnerable children for the past 27 years. The Choirs mission is to raise awareness of the plight of Africa's orphaned and abandoned and also show the beauty, dignity and unlimited potential of each African Child!

We will be serving a meal before the event at our AMEN grill starting at 5:30 p.m. in the parking lot to the east of the church (will be held in the Family Life Center if the weather is too hot or disagreeable!). The menu that night includes chicken and various side dishes, and a free-will offering is also collected for the meal. Come join us for all the festivities!

Do You Need a Christian tune-up?

If so, here are five tune-up specials for you:

1. Adjust your lights so others may see your good works.
2. Set your timing so as to be at the meeting on time.
3. Adjust the brakes on your tongue.
4. Align your direction so that you may stay on the straight and narrow.
5. Anti-freeze your heart and be fervent in spirit. Above all things, love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind.



**FAMILIES IN
ACTION – OMAHA**



Virginia McGill, MA
Executive Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

June Spotlight Families in Action Participant and Volunteer.

This month, it is an honor to feature, Anna, a Families in Action and Latinas in Business participant and program volunteer via Interfaith Health Service. We hope you enjoy getting to know a bit more about Anna and her family! Virginia and Gema, Families in Action

1. How long have you been part of Families in Action?

I take part in the exercise and educational classes several times a week and have done so for 3 years. I really feel the classes have helped me feel better emotionally and physically. I have made friends with the other women and my children have also made friends. The bond we have as a group is very close and very connected. I consider Families in Action as part of my extended family.

2. Can you share a bit about yourself with us?

I was born in Omaha and I graduated from South High School. I am the proud mother of 4 sons. My oldest is 16 and is learning to drive, which makes me a bit nervous as his mother. I also have an 8 year old, a 6 year old, and as of one month ago, my husband and I welcomed our 4th son into our family. I'm proud to say that I was attending Families in Action programs right up until the week I gave birth! I feel that they helped me stay healthy and fit during my pregnancy. I gave birth naturally, and I honestly felt that this pregnancy was my easiest because of the education and exercise classes I received in Families in Action. This is amazing, really, because our newborn also weighed more than any of my other sons, but the birth process was much easier.

3. Why do you enjoy Families in Action?

I enjoy everything about Families in Action. Primarily, I am very proud because our programs welcome everyone. We support one another. I am glad that my children can attend with me, since my husband works construction and his hours can be very long.

4. Why did you enroll in Families in Action Sewing and Micro-Business classes?

Because I want to learn more. I have a dream of helping my husband support our family financially. The sewing and micro-business classes are convenient, near my house and fit my schedule and I can bring my sons with me to classes. The classes are also very practical. I had no experience with sewing. Now, I have already made several skirts and blouses. Additionally, I have sewn clothing together for my sons and husband and this saves me money because I don't have to buy new clothes for them.

5. Would you like to share anything else about yourself or your family?

I'm a quiet person by nature. I am very proud of my family and the work I do. And I would like to thank everyone who makes Families in Action possible. It is a blessing that families can come together to be active and be educated about exercise, nutrition, business and healthy lifestyles. Thank you for helping this community.



Today

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health or I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can mourn my lack of friends or can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school or eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

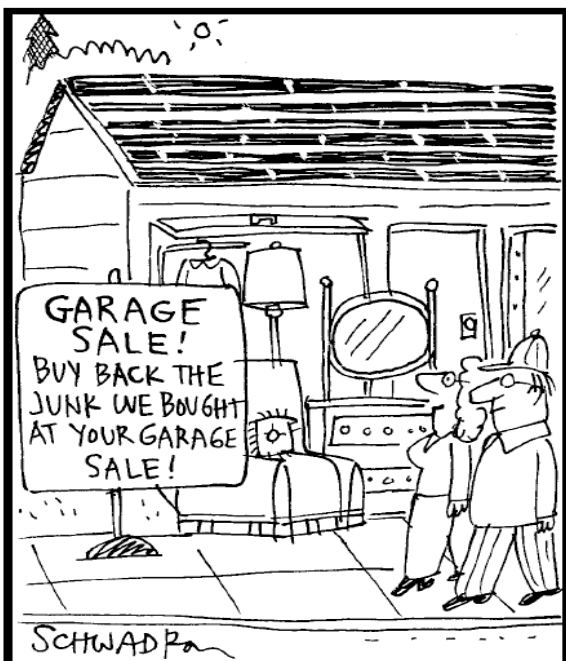
Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework or I can feel honored because the Lord has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping. What today will be like, is up to me.

I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

Author Unknown

Godisgroovy.com



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Special Days in July at Grace Lutheran Church

- July 4 - Independence Day!
- July 10 - Grace Council Meeting.
- July 11 - Photographers Club.
- July 15-19 - Vacation Bible School.
- July 19 - Neighborhood Meeting.
- July 25 - Photographers Club.
- July 25 - Newsletter Assembly.

Rev. George Stewart of Montvale, VA, a retired United Methodist pastor, has this recollection of a very hot summer day in church.

“The church that I pastored had no air-conditioning. I always had a glass of cold ice-water at the pulpit. One Sunday morning, in the middle of my sermon, I noticed my five year-old daughter coming down the aisle to the pulpit. Without a word, she reached for my glass of water, took a drink, and quietly returned to her seat.

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A minister to his son on Facebook wall:

“Dear Son. Hope you are well. Family here is fine, but we miss you a lot. Please turn off the computer and come down for dinner!”

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane

“The shortest distance between two points is under construction.”



Noelle Alito



“C’mon, Daddy! It’s time to put up the decorations of independence!”

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
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