

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



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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
Families In Action - Virginia McGill
Lutheran Volunteer - Matt Kong



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



2013

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 December 11th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us; Vicki's friend Gwen Grady as she deals with her terminal cancer, as well as her friend Harold Sharp dealing with the same. We pray for her brother in law, Ron Hansen with his loss of vision and continued health struggles. We pray for David and the healing of his shingles, and for his mother, Gertrude Hufford awaiting two root canals. We pray for David's sister, Mary Vondra, for her second jaw surgery. We pray for the healing of Ken Hilmer and his ongoing health issues, for June's sister Rose who was recently diagnosed with kidney cancer. We pray for Sarah's boss's wife Julie, as she continues to undergo treatments for breast cancer as well as healing from surgery. We pray for Greg's coworker, Bob Mello, who was recently hit by a van. We pray for those traveling during the holiday season, troops away from their families, and those on the East Coast struggling with rebuilding efforts. We pray for continued guidance and communication with both our council and the council of Bethel Lutheran, as well as for all of the potential changes for both ministries.

Pastor led devotions from Psalm 84:3 and Hebrews 4:9. The first reminds us that even the most helpless and least significant of us is treasured by God. The second reminds us to slow down and share our souls with God.

Visions for Ministry: We continued to ponder and discuss the significance of our discussions with Bethel. We spoke of the changes we'd have to make as well as the positive relationships we would obtain. While this may not necessarily be a huge change for our congregation, it may indeed be a significant change for Bethel. We recognize that it would certainly be a huge change for our Pastor, and we do not intend to take any of it lightly. We encourage others to voice their concerns and their thoughts with us, as we continue down this uncertain, yet hopeful path.

Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. Please give generously as we conclude 2012.

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: Matt Kong is working diligently with the Sudanese young.

Finance: A budget meeting will be scheduled shortly after the New Year.

Property: Pastor met with our Attorneys. Both they and the contractor believe that we have a positive chance with our Church Mutual claim. Motors on the downstairs furnaces need to be replaced.

Service/Social Ministry: Lutheran Volunteer Corp application needs to be submitted by March 1. Our thoughts are of jointly applying for the next season with Bethel.

Continued.....

Support/Stewardship: New envelopes will be available beginning Sunday, December 16th.

Worship: We are enjoying our different Advent Dialogue. Our Christmas Eve service will be set at 5 p.m. again this year.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

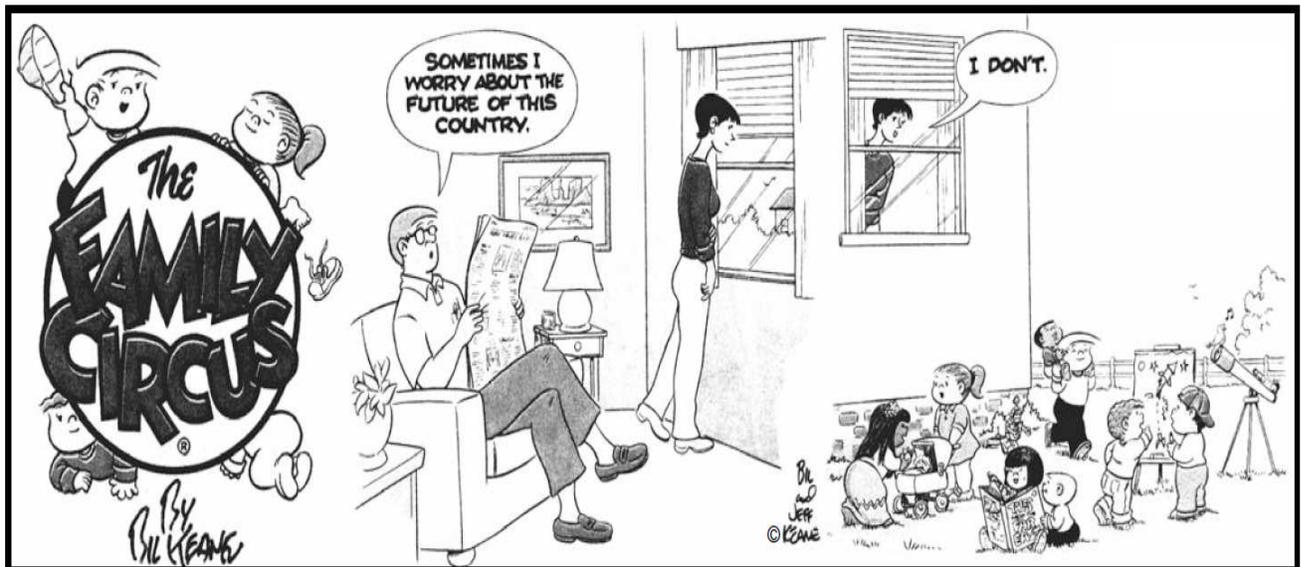
New Business: Nominating Committee assembling for 3 open positions on the council. Samantha, Carolyn, and Greg will all be leaving. Thank you for your service!

Announcements: Our next council will be meeting on the 15th of January. We will hold our Annual Meeting on January 27th. Pastor Houfek & Pastor Laaker will be exchanging worship leadership in the congregations on Jan 6th. Let's remain in thoughtful prayer over the entire situation. Greg will bring treats for our January meeting.

All chairpersons from each committee and organization should have their annual report summary in by January 13, 2013. Please try to have your reports in on time so that the reports can be put together for distribution on Sunday, January 20.

Do you have a new recipe you want to try out? Or a favorite one to share? The potluck lunch will be held on Sunday, January 27, 2013 following worship service prior to the Annual Meeting. Plates, silverware, and drinks will be provided. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

Congregational Meeting





Lisa Sharon Harper wrote in the most recent Sojourners magazine, "In the dark days of Advent, we wonder when the birth pangs will end: Will light break into the darkest corners of our hearts, our families, our lives? Will God - can God - take the twisted sinew of our warped world and redeem it? Will we - can we - hold on through the night? Can we trust that light to come?"

These words ring true as we recoil from yet another massacre of innocents, the killings of twenty kindergarten children at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut. This has become a much too common experience for us, yet we are numb with shock and grief.

This brings to mind the experience of the residents of Bethlehem as they faced the wrath of King Herod and the massacre of innocents following the visit of the visitors from Persia.

How do we make sense of these coinciding events? Do we cry out and ask why God, why this carnage at Christmas? Do we cry out with the prophet of old, "Oh that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears!" We do not understand. Why Lord? We plead for answers.

In the weeping and mourning, Lord may we feel your eternal presence, and may we know your comforting Spirit covering us as a warm blanket of peace. In the name of Jesus Christ, who suffered for us and who now suffers with us, may we find the peace that passes all understanding.

We celebrate the amazing gift of God coming among us as we welcome the newborn Christ on Christmas. This amazing gift comes to shine light into the darkest corners of our hearts, families and lives.

I hope you will come and worship the newborn king as we gather to celebrate on Christmas Eve at 5 pm.

Wishing you the joy of Christ in Christmas!

Pastor Laaker



Miracles abound. They are all around us. They surround us every day, but somehow they don't astound us.

The fact is they are too common, so we forget to be amazed and attend with glazed attention that which really should confound us:

*A hatching egg.****A wing-wet butterfly.****A dandelion gone to seed.
And you.****And me.*

—Nancy L. Dorner, Portage, MI

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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:

- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found.
- ◆ Jim Harrahill - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ken Hilmer - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Ferne Matson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ LaVonne Moss - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Don Olson - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Urbano Vasquez - Ongoing health issues.
- ◆ Rex Olson - Ongoing health issues. (Don Olson's brother.)
- ◆ Wanda Black - Ongoing health issues. (Don Olson's sister.)
- ◆ Norma Courtney - Ongoing health issues. (Arlone Farber's Mom.)
- ◆ Bob Hargis - Recovery from his stroke. (Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer's son-in-law.)
- ◆ Theresa Jorgensen - Recovery following surgery. (Cody Jorgensen's Mom.)
- ◆ Kevin Jorgensen - Health issues. (Cody Jorgensen's Dad.)
- ◆ Jean Matson - Ongoing health issues. (Andrea Spahr's Grandma.)



Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Gertrude Hufford - Immanuel Village.
Ferne Matson - Her son, Ron's house.
Barbara Narducci - Home.
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn.
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 Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod
Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

- ◆ Pray for the Sudanese community in general. David Nange, John Boato 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.*



**Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service
December 24, 2012
5:00 p.m.**



Oh! Come all ye faithful! Come celebrate the joy and wonder of Christ's birth! Come share in the tradition of singing "Silent Night" by candlelight. Bring family and friends so that together, we enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit of Christmas.

Each year, people from Grace Lutheran Church bring donations of mittens, gloves, scarves, and other warm items and place them on the tree. These gifts of warmth are donated to area shelters.

The Christmas Mitten Tree will stand in the upper fellowship hall in December.

During the special sales this holiday season, consider adding a pair of mittens or a scarf or two to your shopping basket.



Merry Christmas
From the Grace Lutheran Staff



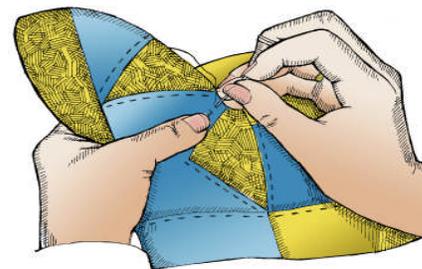
Nenchi Ilka

Colleen Jeffrey

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.



QUILTING GROUP



Confessions
Meditations
Healing

Wednesday Night

January 16, 2013

7:00 p.m.

Candle light Prayer Service
at Grace Lutheran Church.

People of all faiths are welcome!

Words to Start the New Year

“Whether these are the worst of times or the best of times, they are the only times we have.”

—Art Buchwald



“It is not how old you are, but how you are old.”

—Jules Renard
(1864-1910)

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Buy Your 2013 God's Creation Calendar Today!

Fundraiser for the Grace Lutheran Church Library

Each calendar contains beautiful scenic photography enhanced with inspiring Scriptures from the Holy Bible.

Some features of our popular 12-month, 28 page calendar include:

- 12"x9" pages
- high-quality, heavy-weight stock
- gloss-coated photo pages
- matte-finished calendar grid pages
- a superb writing surface
- ample space to write appointments
- a special page for important phone numbers
- 2013 - 2014 year-at-a-glance calendars

Back by
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Only \$5.00!



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 Bob & LaVonne Moss, Jerry & Marilyn Van Ormer, and June Hilmer for decorating the fellowship hall, sanctuary and putting up the mitten tree.
- ◆ Thank you to Greg & Janet Hula, and Andrew Edwards for decorating the Christmas Tree in the sanctuary.

Grace Family,

Thank you so much for all of your prayers and thoughts during this difficult time. It was so wonderful to see how very much you all thought of my Mom, Louise Alsager. She truly thought of you as family. We are truly blessed to know that she is finally home and pain free.

Linda Helm

Grace Lutheran Congregation,

Thank you so much for the gift card. Your thoughtfulness and kindness are greatly appreciated. Thank you for letting me serve you as organist. It's a pleasure that I look forward to every Sunday!

Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year!
Colleen, Eric & Elizabeth

Thank you for welcoming my family as well!



"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

Special Pantry Needs for January:
Soup 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.



Community Baby Shower
Saturday, January 12, 2013
Grace Lutheran Church
1326 South 26th Street
402-341-7730
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.



Enjoy games, fellowship, and refreshments!

All items collected this day will benefit Project Hope.

Many items that cannot be purchased with food stamps are in a constant need to families. These items include diapers of all sizes, baby wipes, baby shampoo, baby laundry detergents, and a variety of clothing items.

Any questions, please call Lori Vasquez at 402-575-5504, or call the church office at 402-341-7730.



Hello all!

Seems like the weeks fly by with how soon I write these pieces. Here's a recap of what's been going on in the meantime:

Indoor activities have commenced! Just last Sunday everyone participated in a vigorous game of dodge ball. Both teams had their share of wins and losses on this day, but everyone had a fun time.



The jump ropes I've made with Bob's help have turned out very well. As of this writing I have two in my possession. Hopefully they live up to repeated use. If so, I may have to hold a contest to find out who is the best jump roper.

With the upcoming holidays this month, I've also had the children make Christmas crafts. You may have noticed them on the window. There are an assortment of elves, snowmen, and sometimes a combination of both!

I'd also like to thank you for the holiday gift. It was very thoughtful and I appreciate it very much! (I expect I'll pick up a more seasonally appropriate hat or a pair of nice warm socks.)

I'll be seeing family for the holidays in Northern California, riding the California Zephyr, which I'm super stoked about. I've never taken the train in the states before and I expect the views to be spectacular.



Happy Holidays!

Matt



A Happy New Year recipe

"Take 12 fine, full-grown months; see that these are thoroughly free from old memories of bitterness, rancor and hate; cleanse them completely from every clinging spite; pick off all specks of pettiness and littleness; in short, see that these months are freed from all the past – have them fresh and clean as when they first came from the great storehouse of Time. Cut these months into 30 or 31 equal parts. Do not attempt to make up the whole batch at one time (so many persons spoil the entire lot this way) but prepare one day at a time. "Into each day put equal parts of faith, patience, courage, work (some people omit this ingredient and so spoil the flavor of the rest), hope, fidelity, liberality, kindness, rest, prayer, meditation, and one well selected resolution. Put in about one teaspoonful of good spirits, a dash of fun, a pinch of folly, a sprinkling of play, and a heaping cupful of good humor."

—Author unknown
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Visiting Nurse Association

VNA is looking for people interested in becoming Hospice volunteers. The Hospice Volunteer Education Class that is conducted by VNA Hospice, Methodist Hospice, and Alegent Creighton along with Hospice House – The Josie Harper Residence will be taking place in February.

Hospice Volunteers are needed to provide companionship and support for individuals living with terminal illnesses and their families. Volunteers choose the hours they are able to serve and determine the geographical location in metro Omaha/Council Bluffs and surrounding area. We are specifically looking for volunteer support during day time hours and those willing to do in-home visits.

Please call one of the following agencies to request an application. Space is limited.

VNA Hospice:	Tanya Roeder	402-342-5566
Methodist Hospice:	Angela Wichita	402-354-3200
Alegent Creighton Hospice:	Mary Pendell	402-898-8150

National Safety Council

Receive assistance from nationally-certified child passenger safety technicians while learning how to correctly install and use your child's safety seat or booster seat. Free Care Seat Safety Check up Events for 2013 are as follows:

January 26	9:00 – 12:00	Performance Ford Service Dept., 9203 S. 145 th Street 402-850-6303
February 23	9:00 – 12:00	Great Plains Auto Body, 14540 Grover Street 402-955-6815
March 23	9:00 – 12:00	Plaza Pontiac, 119 th and I Street 402-898-7356



If you cannot attend an event, please call one of the inspection stations. Inspection stations are appointment only, please plan accordingly.

National Safety Council, Nebraska
402-898-7351 (\$25 fee for service)

Nebraska State Patrol
4411 S. 108th Street - 402-331-3333

Sarpy/Cass Safe Kids @ Sarpy/Cass Health Dept.
701 Olson Drive, Ste. 101, Papillion
402-339-4334

Children's Hospital & Medical Center
84th Street and West Dodge Road
402-955-6815



2012 Babysitting Training

The National Safety Council of Nebraska is sponsoring babysitting training classes which prepare 11 to 15 year olds to care for infants and children safely and with confidence!

Students will learn Pediatric First Aid, CPR and AED, how to handle an illness or injury, dial 911 and give necessary information, and how to evaluate emergency situations. Potential students will also learn how to change diapers, feeding, burping and much more! After learning all of the above, students will receive a Babysitting Class Completion Certificate.

All class times are 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. with lunch provided. The cost to attend a class is \$65.00. 2012 Babysitting Class Dates are January 14, February 11, March 10, April 14, May 12, June 12, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 20, November 10, and December 8. All classes are held at the National Safety Council, Nebraska, 11620 M Circle, Omaha, (just southeast of 120th & L).

For additional information or to register, please call 402-898-7369, or register online at www.SafeNebraska.org.

The St. Olaf Band

Holland Performing Arts Center is hosting The St. Olaf Band on Tuesday, February 5, 2013 at 7:30 p.m., 1200 Douglas Street. Timothy Mahr, Conductor and Terra Widdifield, Manager. Additional information and ticket information is available at 402-345-0606 or online at ticketomaha.com.



Signs you overdid it this Christmas:

- Paramedics bring in the Jaws of Life to pry you out of your recliner.
- You set off three earthquake seismographs on your morning jog.
- You receive a Sumo wrestler application in your e-mail.
- That rash on your stomach turns out to be a steering wheel burn.

—via Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, Dover, DE
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I am a Christian

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I am not shouting that “I am clean living” I’m whispering “I was lost, but now I’m found and forgiven.”

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I don’t speak of this with pride. I’m confessing that I stumble and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I’m not trying to be strong. I’m professing that I’m weak and need God’s strength to carry on.

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I’m not bragging of success. I’m admitting I have failed and need God to clean my mess.

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I’m not claiming to be perfect. My flaws are far too visible, but God believes I am worth it.

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I still feel the sting of pain. I have my share of heartaches, so I call upon His name.

When I say that “I am a Christian,”
I’m not holier than thou. I’m just a simple sinner who received God’s good grace, somehow!

~ Anonymous





FAMILIES IN ACTION – OMAHA



Virginia McGill, MA
Executive Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

Interfaith Hosts Mobile Clinic

Interfaith Health Service and Families in Action was pleased to assist students from Methodist College of Nursing, faculty and HIS Board member Dr. Susie Ward, RN/BSN, in providing mobile clinic outreach again this Fall (please see accompanying photograph of students with Dr. Ward).

Eight amazing students nursing from Methodist College took part in assisting Families in Action women, men and youth in providing free flu shots, blood pressure checks, glucose checks and body mass index readings. Over 100 families took part in the evening's offerings in South Omaha.



We are grateful to Dr. Ward, Methodist College and the students for truly immersing themselves in the experience of getting to know our participants and families. Students were able to see our exercise and educational activities first-hand, and shared that their experience with Families in Action provided a wonderful way to learn about the community in South Omaha.

We look forward to the next activity with Methodist College in the Spring.

A man feared his wife wasn't hearing as well as she used to, and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family doctor to discuss the problem. The doctor told him there was a simple informal test the husband could perform to give the doctor a better idea about her hearing loss.

"Here's what you do," said the doctor, "stand about 40 feet away from her, and in a normal conversational speaking tone, see if she hears you. If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response."

That evening his wife was in the kitchen cooking dinner. He said to himself, "I'm about 40 feet away, let's see what happens." Then in a normal tone he asked, "Honey, what's for dinner?" No response. So the husband moved closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from his wife and repeated, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Still no response. Next he moved into the dining room, where he was about 20 feet from his wife and asked, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Again no response. So he walked up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away: "Honey, what's for dinner?" Again there was no response. So he walked right up behind her: "Honey, what's for dinner?"

"FRED, FOR THE FIFTH TIME, CHICKEN!" she shouted.

—via Walker J. Batts, Texas Township, MI
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SPEED BUMP

by Dave Coverly



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Special Days in December and January at Grace Lutheran Church

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service.
December 25 - Merry Christmas!
December 31 - New Year's Eve.
January 1 - Happy New Year!
January 9 - Photographer's Club.
January 12 - Community Baby Shower.
January 15 - Grace Council Meeting.
January 16 - Prayer Service.
January 23 - Photographer's Club.
January 27 - Annual Meeting.



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When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To free the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,
To make music in the heart.

—Howard Thurman
Asbury News
Minneapolis, MN

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Bible Wordsearch

Babylon has Fallen

Wordsearch 196

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

ANGEL	LORD
BIRD	LUXURY
BURNED	NATIONS
CAGE	PEOPLE
DEATH	PLAGUES
DEMONS	PRISON
DRUNK	QUEEN
FALLEN	REPAY
FAMINE	RICH
FIRE	SINS
FOUL	SORROW
GLORY	SPIRIT
GREAT	TORMENT
HATED	UNCLEAN
HEART	UTTERLY
HEAVEN	WIDOW
JUDGES	WORKS
KINGS	WRATH
	ABUNDANCE
	DWELLING
	MERCHANTS
	BABYLON

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 67

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

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"He's today's greeter."

How to keep warm in church:

- Rush to the front of the sanctuary. That will warm you up, and you'll avoid the draft in the back.
- Invite your neighbors and friends, and sit 12 people to a pew.
- Seat yourself near the pulpit. Much hot air is emitted from that area.
- Wear thermal underwear (in the appropriate liturgical colors, of course).
- Wait for an unfamiliar hymn – and then watch the sparks fly!

—Rev. Pastor Dale Schoening, Bussey, IA
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