

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
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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 Corp - Jessica Menary**

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



**2014**

**THE**  
**GRACE**  
**MESSENGER**



## 2014 Council Members

Vicki Cox	Arlone Farber	Eva Martin
Andrew Edwards	June Hilmer	Loren Moyer
Sarah Emery	Janet Hula	Charles Tuw
		Pastor Laaker

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### Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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The regular meeting of the Council was held on January 14th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us; for Ken Hilmer as he struggles with his blood pressure issues, for June's daughter, Kelly's father in law, David Young as he deals with chemo & radiation. We remember Roseanne Emery as she undergoes a medical procedure today, and Sarah's friend, Ken Payzant (and family) as he lives out his final days. We pray for those in New Mexico, with the recent killings as well as those continuing to struggle with unrest in Sudan. We rejoice with and praise God for the birth of baby Claudia to Andy & Robin Kammerer, and for the upcoming wedding of Sarah's friend, Michelle Stading.

Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts." We read from Daniel 4:37 and 1 Peter 5:6. The first reminds us to be humble / modest. The second reminds us to keep ourselves in our place, and not lift our expectations beyond what we ought.

Visions for Ministry: We continued to ponder and discuss the book, Can Our Congregation Live? We discussed that nothing will make a difference if we cannot focus on the fundamentals. How do we engage others?! What other ideas can emerge? Come and see. Lots of positive energy. Let's continue reading, we will re-discuss the final chapter next month.

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

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: No new report.

Finance: The Organizational Fund will now show three accounts, the Flower Fund, the Sunday School fund and the Thrivent Fund. The council ratified the motions set forth by the Endowment Report. The council adopted the resolution to set Pastor's housing allowance for 2014. The Council approved the proposed 2014 budget to present to the congregation at the annual meeting.

Property: There is a small leak in the roof - Joel will take a look soon.

Service/Social Ministry: No new report.

Support/Stewardship: Thank you to all for your contributions and promised giving. Letters were intentionally sent to all those who made a commitment.

Worship: Lent begins in March this year.

*Continued....*

Unfinished Business: The nominating committee presented the names of Arlone Farber and Loren Moyer for the open council positions. We continue to look for a Sudanese representative.

New Business: The Synod Assembly will be in Fremont this year at the end of May. Our constitution will be revised to be compliant with the ELCA Model Constitution and will be presented as amended at the annual meeting. The Council nominated Marsha Moyer to serve on the Endowment Board. Donna Adrian completes her term.

Announcements: Dinner for the council appreciation at Malara's on Tuesday, January 21st at 6 p.m. Janet will bring treats for our February meeting.



On Easter, we celebrate the joy and hope of Christ's resurrection. Yet around the world "the least of these" — those Christ calls us to serve — continue to suffer.

Grace Lutheran can reach out to those in need by joining Lutheran World Relief's **Baskets of Promise** Lenten appeal. Throughout Lent, we will be collecting [Personal Care Kits](#) to send to families around the world.

Musayev lives in a settlement in Azerbaijan for people who have had to leave their homes. His family does their best to support everyone but they are often unable to afford basic hygiene supplies. Recently Musayev received an LWR Personal Care Kit and was excited to learn how to use it. "How many times a day should you clean your teeth?" he eagerly asked.

For children like Musayev, Personal Care Kits are not only a way to stay healthy but a way to learn personal care and preserve dignity. This Lenten season, as our congregation journeys toward the Cross, let us be Christ's hands to children like Musayev by providing Personal Care Kits and paving the way for a "future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Items that are needed to complete a Basket of Promise are:

- Bars of Soap (4 to 5 oz., any brand, in original wrapping)
- Bath Towels (light-weight, maximum 52" x 27", dark color recommended)
- Toothbrushes (adult size, in original packaging)
- Combs
- Nail Clippers (metal, attached file optional)
- A Second Bar of Soap

Grace Lutheran will be collecting items to assemble 30 Personal Care Kits to faithfully bring a future of hope to families in need. You can be a part of this Lenten journey and bring an item or two and brighten the hope, faith, and future of an individual or a family through Lutheran World Relief.



This past Sunday, we heard the story from Matthew's Gospel where Jesus invites Peter, Andrew, James and John to "Come, follow me!" This began a process of discipleship. I often wonder what it must have been like to follow Jesus in person. These days, I wonder what it takes to see Jesus as someone worth following.

Last September, Rev. Dr. David Daubert wrote on his Day 8 Strategies blog under the title: Why Discipleship Costs. He begins by reflecting on an ad from a church supply house that read: "Lower the Cost of Discipleship."

Here is what he said: "When I read the content, I know they didn't see the humor. They were putting their discipleship materials on sale and, not being Lutheran, probably hadn't read Bonhoeffer's classic *The Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer was concerned about people taking the call to follow Jesus too lightly. He called this temptation "cheap grace."

"While I enjoy a good sale as much as the next person, the gaff made me think about how easy it is to try to make the life of faith palatable and easier. Congregations are shrinking and that puts us a bit on edge. A shrinking system feels painfully at risk and in the denomination to which I belong, probably close to a third of the congregations really are at risk of closing or seriously changing how they do what they do just to survive. In a world where even the Masons (a "secret" society) have started advertising to try to get people in, the temptation to make the leap to church membership easier is not only tempting, it seems intuitively obvious.

"There is little evidence to support this desire. Church attendance in many places is down even though almost the same number of people belong – they just come 2-3 times a month instead of every week. They are still active and involved. We don't think any thing of it. They just have a lot of other priorities in their lives and church is just one of them. While God is probably pleased with some of the other things they do in addition to church life, less sense that church matters as much is a real issue. A project I was involved in over the last three years surveyed about 1200 people in the pews. Almost a quarter (23%) reported being relatively agnostic about their faith – unsure and uncommitted to what they believe. Another group, almost half, (46%) reported that they felt like they believed the basics of the Christian story but could build no connections between those basics and their daily lives. All told these two groups added up to over two-thirds of the people reporting that they felt uncommitted or ill equipped to even try to take the life of discipleship seriously. Of even more significance is the fact that the younger a person is, the less likely they are to assume the church is worth taking seriously. A "why bother" attitude is often the presupposition they bring.

"A church that makes no claims to change peoples' lives and makes no call to them to join in with the work of Jesus simply ratifies that notion. Why bother joining a place that will take my time, energy and money but makes no real impact on who I am and what I am all about? The truth is, discipleship does cost. People of faith increasingly sense that and want to belong to a community of faith that calls them to that and equips them for that. While the ad to "Lower the Cost of Discipleship" did make me laugh (in a sort of sad way), effective churches today will advertise "Increase the Cost of Discipleship" and invite people to changed lives and carrying on the work of Jesus."

So, yesterday in my sermon, I suggested that we take the "app's" of discipleship like "smile, give up your seat, pay it forward, just dropping by, turn the other cheek, or a Barnabas blast" as a matter of love practice. I would hope that being a disciple of Jesus might be seen in all the ways we extend love and care to all those we cross paths with in our daily life. This might indeed increase the cost of discipleship but it will definitely have an impact on others as they see Christ in me.

Pr. Laaker

Please  
Pray  
for...



## 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*

Those we pray for named below are members unless otherwise specified:  
We pray for those with ongoing health issues:

- † Andrew Edwards
- † Jim Harrahill
- † Ken Hilmer
- † David Hufford
- † Carolyn Matson
- † Ferne Matson
- † LaVonne Moss
- † Robert Moss
- † Don Olson



### 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 - Brookstone Meadows, Elkhorn.

- † Lori Vasquez
- † Urbano Vasquez
- † Gloria Moore - recovery from a fall.
- † Scott Moore - recovery following surgery.
- † Norma Courtney (Arlone Farber's Mom.)
- † Bob Hargis (Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer's son-in-law.)
- † Christian Barajas (Samantha Trejo, Angela & Alex Everitt's brother.)
- † Sandy Fitzgerald (Gloria Moore's daughter.)



### 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 Damon Laaker, Grace Lutheran Church  
Bishop Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod  
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, 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.*

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### Inspirational Quotes – SkyWriting.net

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness. ~ Seneca

A heathen philosopher once asked a Christian, “Where is God?”  
The Christian answered, “Where is He not?”

~ Aaron Arrowsmith



What is the purpose of [Lent](#)? Why do we celebrate this 40-day season of fasting and prayer that begins this year on March 5 (Ash Wednesday), observes Good Friday on April 18, and concludes triumphantly on Easter Sunday, April 20? Lent is intended to resurrect our joy. Lent originally meant "springtime": the word comes from the Old English word for "spring," lenten, which came from lengan, "to make longer"—reminding us that the slow, wonderful lengthening of this season in our souls can signal an end to a winter of bitterness and the flowering of Christ's love in us.

**Ash Wednesday, March 5**  
**6:00 p.m. Lenten Supper**  
**7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter Eve. It commemorates the forty days of fasting and prayer by which Jesus prepared himself for his ministry. (St. [Matthew 4:1-11](#).) Since the 7th Century it has been the beginning of a period of Christian fasting and prayer. It is called Ash Wednesday because, if they wished, penitents could have ashes placed onto their foreheads at the communion rail.



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

Hosts and Hostesses are needed to prepare and serve the Wednesday Night Lenten Supper beginning on March 5 through April 9. Volunteers will also be needed for the Maundy Thursday meal on April 17 and the Easter breakfast on April 20. If you are willing to help, a sign up sheet has been posted on the main bulletin board.

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Our youth will hold soup pots at church doors on Souper Bowl Sunday, February 2nd. They will join young people in churches all across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting.

In 2013, youth groups in all 50 states and outside the United States participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring generating \$9,583,628. All of the money collected is donated to a charity selected by the participant. *None of the money is sent to Souper Bowl headquarters.*



Organizers only ask that each participant report their collection so national totals can be determined and announced. Our church will donate the Souper Bowl collection to the Lutheran Pantry. Since the Souper Bowl of Caring became a national grassroots event in 1993, more than \$29 million has gone to help those in need. Please support the youth of our church in this effort to "love our neighbors" by dropping your dollar in the soup pot on February 2, 2014.



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



Coffee Fellowship

### 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. No experience is necessary! Join in the great fellowship and conversation.



### mitten tree

Each year, people from Grace Lutheran Church bring donations of mittens, gloves, scarves, and other warm items and place them on the tree. The tree has been packed away for another year but the gifts will share God's love to many! This year 91 total items were donated! 1 pair of warm socks, 3 scarves, 9 pairs of slippers, 32 hats and 46 mittens and gloves. These gifts of warmth are donated to area pantries.

### Results

### Carol Joy Holling Camp presents....

### Family Game Night

An event for all ages!

Come out to camp and enjoy a night with family and friends. We'll have chili and cinnamon rolls for dinner, followed by some quality time with your family playing favorite board games. You are also welcome to bring your own. There will even be some fun activities led by a few members of the Summer Ministry Team.

Cost for this event is \$4/person, kids 3 and under are free.

Sign up as a church group or individual families.  
RSVP at [www.caroljoyholling.org](http://www.caroljoyholling.org) or pay at the door!  
Any questions, please contact Kelsey Rabel at [krabel@nlom.org](mailto:krabel@nlom.org)

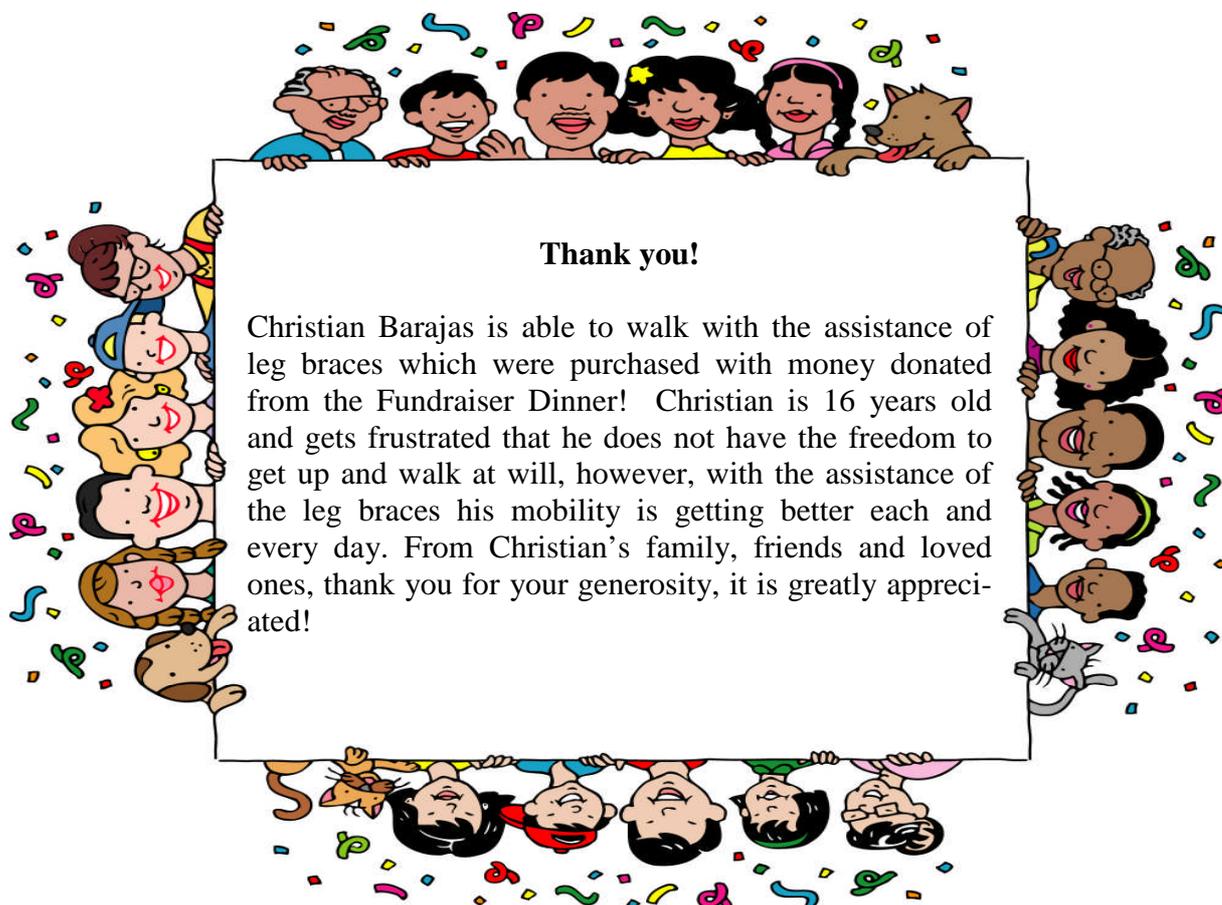


And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

*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 the ESL tutors; Vicki Cox, Arlone Farber, Mary Laaker, Jessica Menary, and Amanda Vazquez, for making that connection with the students willing to learn and form friendships.
- ◆ Thank you to the Quilters, Marilyn, LaVonne, Bob, June, and Eva. Your dedication to creating quilts for Lutheran World Relief is truly a reflection of God's love.
- ◆ 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 Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer, 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 crew; Marilyn, Jerry, LaVonne, Bob, June, Gloria, and Eva. The dedication and great conversations during assembly is greatly appreciated!



February is of course the shortest month but sometimes the gray and cold weather makes it seem long. I think to honor February I will make this article short like the month! And because I recently wrote about what I have been doing at work in the annual report I will use this medium to tell you about some of the things outside of work I have been enjoying. Even in February there are still fun things to do; I have enjoyed some of the nicer days and taken advantage of warmer weather to do things outside with my friends like go for walks and runs, ride bikes, and play softball. I think the bitterness of winter really makes us appreciate when it is pleasant outside and I hope you all also find joy in the sunshine. I have also enjoyed playing board games and watching movies. I recently saw a movie set in the future where character's job was to write love letters to people from other people. This got me thinking about how we can use this month and season of Valentine's Day to personally show those we love we care through notes, cards, phone calls, or visits. Let's make the most of this short month to fit in as much joyful things as we can. Let's appreciate those we have in our lives and appreciate the activities we have abilities to do. And while we all may grumble about the groundhog seeing his shadow, there are still many things to find joy in. :)



Jessica Menary, Lutheran Volunteer Community Outreach Associate,  
(641-990-5324 outreach@graceluth.com)



## "Helping Hands"

Special Pantry Needs for February:  
Fruits (all varieties are welcomed!)

**Items that clients cannot purchase with their food stamps are always appreciated:** Dish Soap, Kleenex, Bar Soap, Deodorant, Toothbrush and toothpaste, Shaving Cream, Razors, Mouthwash (without alcohol), Feminine hygiene products, Hair products (combs, brushes, picks), Bathroom tissue, Shampoo, Dry Laundry Soap, Can Openers, Diaper wipes, and Diapers, especially sizes 4, 5, 6 and pull-ups.

**We always need paper or plastic bags.**

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



**4205 Boyd St  
Omaha, NE 68111  
402-453-7649**

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; and To make music in the heart.

~ Howard Thurman, Asbury News, Minneapolis, MN  
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## Come to OTOC Issues Conference on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> to shape issues facing families

Leaders of Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) will hold a morning of workshops, discussion and planning for action on issues affecting Omaha families. Come to the OTOC Issues Conference on Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> from 9:00 to Noon at Augustana Lutheran Church (3647 Lafayette Ave). Learn about proposed bills to change Nebraska income tax and expand health insurance for low income families; improving availability of mental health care, housing, workforce development and public education. Learn about plans for immigration reform, supporting refugees and prisoners re-entering society. For more information go to [OTOC.org](http://OTOC.org) or call 402-344-4401.

### Habitat for Omaha 2014 Coalition Kick-Off

Where: Presbyterian Church of the Cross,  
1517 South 114th Street Omaha, 68144

When: Saturday, February 8, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Faith coalition members are invited to enjoy some fellowship and receive information on important events and changes for 2014. Lunch will be provided. Additionally, Habitat Omaha will provide a grant of \$100 toward the cost of your 2014 coalition build for each person who attends from your coalition. There is a limit of 4 grants per coalition, church partner.

You will need to register. Please let me know if you will attend as we can maximize our grants.

Thanks for your help with Neighbors South!



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Rev.18:21-19:6

## Hallelujah

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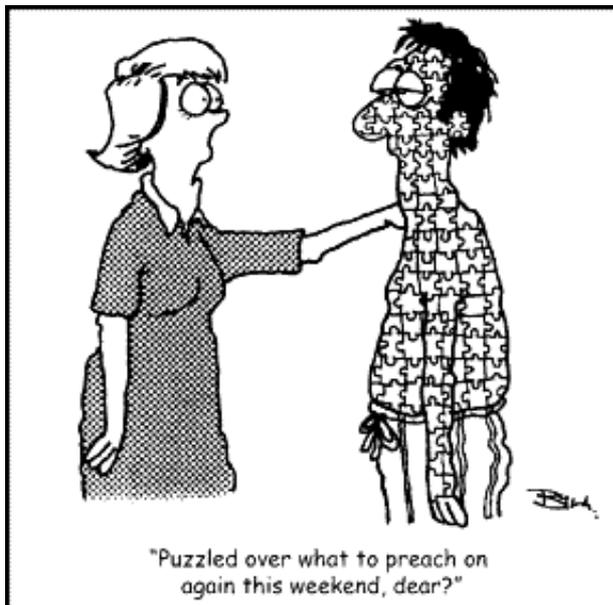
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ASTRAY BABYLON  
BRIDE BOULDER  
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MAGIC MILLSTONE  
MUSIC NATIONS  
PEALS PROPHETS  
PICKED RUSHING  
POWER SAINTS  
PRAISE SALVATION  
REIGNS SERVANTS  
SHINE SHOUTED  
SMOKE THRONE  
SOUND THROWN  
VOICE THUNDER

WORKMAN

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

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MORE PUZZLES AT:  
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### Miracles

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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