

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



2013 Council Members

John Boato	Sarah Emery	David Hufford
Vicki Cox	Ralph Fitle	Janet Hula
Andrew Edwards	June Hilmer	Eva Martin
		Pastor Laaker

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on December 10th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: We pray for the continued recovery of those close to us. We pray for the healing of Jackie Costello and her current health issues, for Madison Emery after her sledding accident, for Julie Lentz as she recovers from her recent bike accident, and for David Young, Ralph's niece, and Steve Anselo as they heal. We pray for those in South Africa dealing with the loss of Nelson Mandela. We pray for all those traveling during this Christmas season. We keep in mind and appreciate all those volunteers and donors during this season.

Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker reading the selected verses in the "*Daily Texts.*" Devotions were from Proverbs 15:1 and James 1:19. The first speaks to us about taking our time and using love as our tool. The second reminds us to stop and listen.

Visions for Ministry: We discussed chapter three in our book. We discussed how to recognize and react. Do we all realize that change is necessary? Let's be an anchor and reach out to those around us. Let's spend some time and focus on our procedures. Please re-read from page 76 into chapter 5 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: The ESL Christmas party was a great success. The council also decided to move forward with the 2014 LVC Application.

Finance: The council adopted a resolution of who can conduct business for the MIF Authorization; Pastor and Ralph will be authorized. The church will also continue with the \$50 Christmas gifts for staff.

Property: Pastor completed a survey through OPPD for \$25. The Endowment Board will be asked to approve the funds for purchase of a new microwave/oven for the upper fellowship kitchen, and a new microwave for the lower fellowship kitchen.

Service/Social Ministry: OTOC handout about improving the housing and sense of community in Omaha's older neighborhoods. Pastor shared the report of the outcomes of the Pre-Thanksgiving dinner.

Support/Stewardship: 2014 Mission Share discussed.

Continued....

Worship: Thanksgiving - 90 in attendance, \$590 plus several crates of food stuffs collected. Organist contract was renewed. Memorandum of Understanding signed by Pastor Edgar Jimenez of Prince of Peace Church Pentecostal.

Unfinished Business: No new report.

New Business: No new report.

Announcements: The annual meeting will be held the last Sunday in January. Sarah will bring treats for our January meeting.



Congregational Meeting

All chairpersons from each committee and organization should have their annual report summary in by January 15, 2014. Please try to have your reports in on time so that the annual report can be put together for distribution on Sunday, January 19.



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 26, 2014 following worship service prior to the Annual Meeting. Plates, silverware, and drinks will be provided. Please plan to attend this important meeting.





Merry Christmas! However, the Christmas season is over in the secular world. The leftovers have been eaten, frozen, or thrown out. The unwanted, unneeded, or incorrect gifts have been or are being returned to the store. A very few radio stations are still including Christmas carols in their line ups, but you're probably sick of hearing them anyway since they've been on for over a month.

But in the Christian church, Christmas continues. This is the one time of the year that we talk about the kindness of God to come to us when we had turned away; to willingly take on human flesh, not by fiat, but in the same way each of us came into the world -- as a helpless infant, dependant on other humans to be safe, to remain alive, and to thrive and grow. In doing this, God becomes visibly vulnerable to us. It is the one time of the year when we know that we are valued, loved by God. When we see the Christ Child, either in the manger or in the arms of Mary, fear is banished, and we cannot help but smile at this tiny representation of the most high Lord God.

Another pastor tells the story about a large nativity set that was set up in the sanctuary. "The first Sunday after Christmas we had a large number of children present, and for the children's chapel talk I invited them to come up to the nativity set and asked them some questions about the figures. One of the little girls asked, "Can we hold the baby?" I took a deep breath because I wasn't sure we could replace the baby if it were broken, but I seized the opportunity, took the baby from the manger, and let each of the children hold him for a few seconds. When we were done, I gently replaced baby Jesus in the manger and dismissed the children. I was pleased this went so well, but really thought no more about it until the grandmother of the little girl who had asked to hold the baby came to me a week later.

"I want you to know that my daughter's family goes to a church of a different denomination here in the city," she said. "This past Sunday, as they got dressed for church, my granddaughter said that she didn't want to go to their regular church." With a gleam in her eye, she continued, "My daughter said that was too bad, but they were going to their own church. And my granddaughter said, " 'But I want to go back to the church where you get to hold Jesus.' " This is just what the adults need too -- to be able to hold Jesus. Without Christmas, when would that happen?

In the next two Sundays, we get to celebrate Christmas. Our gospel, for December 29, is focused on the vulnerability of Jesus even as he is born -- and the faith of Joseph in following God's directions to protect the Christ Child. Our gospel, for January 5, is focused on John's creative way of describing God's coming among us as the Word.

Let's worship this amazing love gift and rejoice in Christ's presence among us.

Pr. Laaker



Thank You!!!

I want to express my deepest appreciation for the kindness shown to me and our family by your love gift on Christmas Eve. I am grateful to be remembered in such a wonderful way. May God bless you as you have been a wonderful blessing to us.

Pastor Laaker



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
- ✠ Lori Vasquez
- ✠ Urbano Vasquez
- ✠ 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 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.

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.*

A 5-year-old girl was in a grocery store in Chestnut, LA, with her mother when she noticed an African-American lady at the checkout counter. She asked her, "Why is your face black?"

"God made me that way," the woman answered with a smile.

"You mean God makes people different colors - like flowers?!" the girl exclaimed.

- via Jeff W. Totten, Lake Charles, LA

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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.



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 come down during the first or second week of January, there is still time to make a difference for someone in need. Winter items are needed in all sizes, please bring your donations and place them on the tree.



Fundraiser Success for Christian Barajas

Christian Barajas is the grandson of Lori Vasquez, Davena Garcia's son, and brother to Samantha Trejo, Angela and Alexandra Everitt. On December 11th between 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. the opportunity to experience a traditional Latina Meal was held.

The dinner was so awesome! A big thanks to everyone that had a hand in preparing the food and serving the food and the clean up. Over \$500 was donated to help off set the ever increasing medical bills that are accumulating during Christian's fight against cancer. A very special thanks to everyone that showed up and donated! Gods Blessings to all of you.



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!
- ◆ Thank you to all the Christmas decorating gurus this year, the church and the sanctuary looked so beautiful!

Grace Lutheran Congregation,

Thank you everyone so much for the beautiful Christmas card, it was greatly appreciated.
Blessings to all for the New Year!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Barb Narducci

Grace Lutheran Congregation,

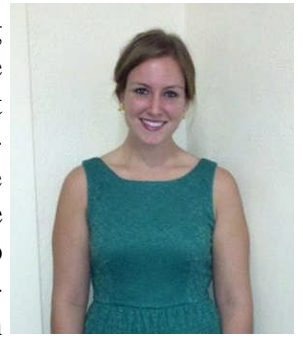
Thank you so much for the gift card. Your kindness and generosity are greatly appreciated. I have greatly enjoyed serving as organist at Grace Lutheran. Our family has always felt welcomed and been treated with kindness. Thanks again!

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

Thank you Grace Lutheran Church for the gift card this Christmas season. The generosity is greatly appreciated. I thoroughly enjoy being the secretary here at Grace Lutheran and look forward to 2014 and all the possibilities it may bring!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Brenda, John & Andrea

Happy New Year! I am looking forward to the New Year even though nothing changes much except for the date, which I am sure I will write wrong for awhile like every year. What else happens around this time of year? Well, people start making resolutions to change things about their lives as this fresh New Year begins. A couple of my housemates are changing jobs, a few family members are working to change their bodies and lose weight, friends are changing habits to be more caring for the environment and/or of their loved ones. What do I want to change? Instead of cutting something out of my life or changing things completely; I want to build on what I have already. Instead of negatively focusing on things I need to do differently, I will focus on how I can expand what I am doing and add positive things into my life. I want to apply this to my work here at Grace by opening this idea up to our congregation. What can we do as a congregation that is not a huge change but that is something we can work on to build upon what we already do well? I would love to hear from anyone, and will share a few ideas that I have with you all now. I think we do a great job of making our church available to be of good use for many different things. We also do a good job getting involved and helping others. So let's keep it up and build on what we do! I see a lot of potential that this church has to not only bring lots of people under one roof, but to also bring people together. Maybe we should consider having a few worship services, a few dinners, a few events that combine the different people and cultures that use this church and bring us all together to learn more about each other and enjoy time together.



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



"Helping Hands"

Special Pantry Needs for January:
 Soup and Crackers

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.



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 clothing, in all sizes.

"If you think you have an original idea, you probably forgot where you read it." ~ Mark Twain

"One good thing about being wrong is the joy it brings to others." ~ Author unknow

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FAMILIES IN ACTION – OMAHA



Virginia McGill, MA
Executive Director

Gema C. Wolde
Community Health Worker
Se habla español.

IHS and Families in Action Community Award and Graduation

Our Program Coordinator with Interfaith and Families in Action, Gema, complete 40 additional hours of training with Our Families' Health, part of a Minority Health Initiative through Methodist College. Our Families' Health is a community education program that prepares individuals to engage as health promoters, "*promotoras*," in their own communities in the states of Iowa and Nebraska. Participants in the program receive instruction and certification in leadership, communication, interpersonal skills, service coordination, capacity building, advocacy, teaching and health literacy.



Our Families' Health - *La Salud de Nuestras Familias* – specifically targets Spanish -speaking populations. Gema is excited to use additional skills from this training to augment the training she has already completed as she continues to assist Families in Action participants in addressing their health and wellness needs. Please see the accompanying photo of Gema on the day of the ceremony with her daughter, Nurit!

Part of the curriculum for this year's Our Families' Health education included exercise and educational presentations by Norma and Maria, staff educators from IHS and Families in Action. Norma and Maria assisted Our Families' Health in reaching community health workers and their children by offering hands-on health and wellness activities throughout the program's durations.

The staff and directors of the Minority Health Initiative, Our Families' Health and Methodist College also presented an award for Community Partnership to Families in Action in recognition of our organization's collaborative service and programs in the local community. Gema and Virginia were deeply honored to accept the award, and in doing so, honor the many families, donors, volunteers, partners, participants, staff and Board members who make IHS and Families in Action possible.

Virginia and Gema, IHS



Congratulations Gema!

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

The gift of generosity

This holiday season, we thank everyone who has supported Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church this past year with their time, talent and financial contributions and look forward to support from all of our members in the year ahead. If you need a convenient way to make regular offerings or if you plan to make an additional gift before the end of the year, we encourage you to look into our electronic giving options. As the pace of life speeds up, especially around the holidays, you may find electronic giving a most welcome way to make contributions. Please contact the church office if you have any questions or for more information.



Electronic Fund Giving

Buy Your 2014 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:

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- 2014 - 2016 year-at-a-glance calendars

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WHEN YOU THOUGHT I WASN'T LOOKING

A message every adult should read, because children are watching you and doing as you do, not as you say.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you hang my first painting on the refrigerator, and I immediately wanted to paint another one.

When you thought I wasn't looking I saw you feed a stray cat, and I learned that it was good to be kind to animals.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make my favorite cake for me and I learned that the little things can be the special things in life.

When you thought I wasn't looking I heard you say a prayer, and I knew there is a God I could always talk to and I learned to trust in God.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you make a meal and take it to a friend who was sick, and I learned that we all have to help take care of each other.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you give of your time and money to help people who had nothing and I learned that those who have something should give to those who don't.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw you take care of our house and everyone in it and I learned we have to take care of what we are given.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw how you handled your responsibilities, even when you didn't feel good and I learned that I would have to be responsible when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw tears come from your eyes and I learned that sometimes things hurt, but it's all right to cry.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I saw that you cared and I wanted to be everything that I could be.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I learned most of life's lessons that I need to know to be a good and productive person when I grow up.

When you thought I wasn't looking, I looked at you and wanted to say, "Thanks for all the things I saw when you thought I wasn't looking."

Today I said a prayer for you. How will you touch the life of someone today? Just by sending this to someone else, you will probably make them at least think about their influence on others.

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Bible Wordsearch

Wordsearch 220

Rev. 18:11-20

Babylon has fallen 2

S	S	P	I	H	S	F	M	S	S	O	R	G	S	S
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APOSTLES	COSTLY
BRONZE	CATTLE
BURNING	GAINED
CARGOES	HEAVEN
DRESSED	IVORY
EXCLAIM	LINEN
INCENSE	MOURN
JUDGED	MARBLE
PRECIOUS	PEARLS
PROPHETS	RICHES
REJOICE	SAINTS
SAILORS	SHIPS
SCARLET	SILVER
SPLENDOR	SMOKE
TORMENT	SOULS
TREATED	SPICE
WEALTH	STONES

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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"I wish for those I love this New Year an opportunity to bring into the lives of those about them some measure of joy, to know the satisfaction of work well done, and to end the year a little wiser, a little kinder, and therefore a little happier."

~ Eleanor Roosevelt
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Sign outside Center Street Baptist Church, Marshalltown, IA:

"The greatest gift of all was delivered in a manger, not a sleigh."

—via Pastor Dale A. Schoening
 Woodward United Methodist Church
 Woodward, IA

"What good is it that Christ was born centuries ago if he is not born now in your heart?"

—Meister Eckhart
 (c. 1260 AD)