

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

Email: graceluth@graceluth.com
Web Site: www.graceluth.com
Like us on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/gracelutheranomaha

REGULAR SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 a.m. Christian Education
11:00 a.m. Worship Service

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office March 26



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Omaha NE
Permit No. 39

Return Service Requested
Dated Material



THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2020



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



2020 Council Members

Donna Adrian	Tom Emery	Arlone Farber
Ralph Fitle	Janet Hula	Sandy Nielsen
Brenda Spahr	Amanda Vazquez	
Pastor Laaker		

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

The regular meeting of the Council was held on March 10th. Council members shared prayer concerns for Ralph's neighbor's family who is mourning the loss of his neighbor, everyone - especially those with weakened immune systems - who may be exposed to the coronavirus, those who are fighting cancer including Sandy's daughter's brother in law, and for all of the leaders in our country.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Psalm 27:1 and 2 Timothy 1:7. The first talks about not needing to fear because God is our stronghold. The second tells us that God gave us a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline.

Visions for Ministry: Pastor shared his experience from his early morning walk. He came upon 5 deer. As he approached the first 2 stopped and watched him cautiously, while the older deer to the back ran a little ways away with the younger two following. As he continued walking, the older deer in the back and one of the younger ones ran off into the woods, but the other younger deer noticed the first two deer who stopped and watched, and he followed their example. This was the perfect example of what the author expressed in this chapter of our book. If our leaders react quickly giving into their anxiety, it creates chaos and heightened anxiety in the rest of the group. If our leaders react calmly, it quells anxiety in others around them and allows them to react more purposefully and less reactively.

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

Christian Education: Early Communion - will be offered starting at the end of March. Grand Camp - Pastor will be attending with 2 of his grandsons in June.

Evangelism/Outreach: Micah Laaker used a Thrivent Action Fund to create Bible packs for kids.

Finance: Endowment Report - accepted by Council members.

Property: North Basement wall - more information was shared about the work that will be done. Motion carried to move ahead with the project.

North Fence - Thank you to Cesar and Alma who trimmed all the stuff back on both sides of the fence.

Basement Floor - tile breaks during the winter months. We will repair for now, and look at larger project sometime further in the future.

Service/Social Ministry: OTOC "Celebrating Community" Saturday, March 28th - talk to Vicki to get tickets.

Habitat Faith Coalition Build 3724 N. 22nd St. begins March 20.

LWR Personal Care Kits - we are collecting items each week to donate.

CJH Camp Delirium Kits - service project that campers will be working on this summer.

Support/Stewardship: Nebraska Synod Road Show April 18th - let Pastor know if you intend to go.

Worship: Lent Reflections - it's been nice to come together as a larger group. Roast beef will be provided at the Maundy Thursday meal - sides and desserts are asked for potluck.

Unfinished Business: Synod Assembly Voting Members - Terry & Sandy Nielsen will be attending. Terry is being recognized for his 40th anniversary of ordination.

New Business: Brotherhood Mutual - information regarding COVID-19 provided.

Announcements: Continuing Ed - Voyagers March 30-April 3. Sandy will bring treats for April.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

Continued...



Katie L. Hodges-Kluck writes in *Sojourners* magazine: In the late 1340s, the plague outbreak that we know as the Black Death descended upon Asia, Europe, and Africa, causing widespread disruption and death. Medieval responses to the pandemic varied. In many European cities, social chaos, fear, and mistrust were widespread. In Syria, by contrast, we find the example of a community that united in its response to the pandemic. Although medieval people lacked the medical knowledge to help them avoid infection and the plague was far more lethal than today's COVID-19 virus, their reactions to the pandemic can still teach us today.

In his preface to *The Decameron* (1353), the Italian scholar Giovanni Boccaccio (d. 1375) detailed not only the physical symptoms of the Black Death as it arrived in Florence in 1348, but also its influence on Italian society. Boccaccio describes people who, whether through indifference, bravado, or fear of social isolation, continued to go out to bars and public events even when the evidence indicated that seclusion was the best option. He recounted how funeral rites in Italy were canceled and families cut themselves off from infected relatives and neighbors.

Similar to today, economic divides influenced the ability of people to respond to the plague, as wealthy Italians fled to countryside retreats while the poor tried to isolate themselves as best they could in crowded cities. Across Europe, foreigners and Jews were scapegoated, tortured, and killed, even as those very same communities fell victim to the illness. According to the chronicler Jacob Königshofen (d. 1420), for instance, Christians in Basel, Germany in 1349 accused Jews of poisoning their wells and compelled their town council to ban Jews from the city for 200 years. The news shows us similar responses taking place today, with nation-specific travel bans and Asian-Americans being subjected to discrimination and bullying on account of the coronavirus.

Continued.....

I believe the issues at stake right now are not *partisan* — rather they are *confessional*. And questions of confession have continued to frame my thoughts: How can we understand what it means to confess Christ and reclaim Jesus in this critical year and beyond? How do we go deeper and closer, even when public health requires we stay physically distant from one another?

Many of us are experiencing fear from all sides. Meanwhile, Jesus tells us that “perfect love casts out fear,” and Timothy says that “the spirit of fear” is only overcome by “the power of love and a sound mind.” Now more than ever, we must exhibit the love that Jesus taught: courageous love that is transformational, targeted, and willing to take risks.

As we all are trying to respond to this unexpected and unpredictable moment, I believe the faith factor needs to be considered essential to our collective health and common good. It would be easy to let social distancing lead to social isolation, lack of proximity reduce solidarity, and hunkering down with family decrease community. **But we all have an opportunity, even in this time and space, to lift up facts over fear and lean into loving our neighbors, for the protection of all.**

We have much of this captured in our mission statements. For Grace, it reads: Inspired by Christ, it is our mission to share God's Word and Love in care and service to all.” For St. Luke, it reads: Our mission is through love to reach out, to serve and to welcome all in the name of Jesus. All includes us and our neighbors. May we hold each other up in prayer and do all we can safely to extend love.

Pastor Laaker

While we have suspended in-person gatherings through Easter, please join us online via our YouTube channel and our Facebook community. Help us to stay connected during this time, please visit Grace's website at graceluth.com and update or add your contact information. You will find it in yellow on the top right corner of the home page. Click it, fill it in, and submit.



IN OUR Thoughts and Prayers

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:18

Please keep in your prayers the individuals listed below who have health issues and concerns:

Vicki Cox
Justin Kobold
Susan Miller
Carol Nabarez
Pam Reents
Urbano Vasquez



Andrew Edwards
Carolyn Matson
Sue Mize
Oren Powley
Marilyn Van Ormer

Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Lutheran.

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

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.



Pray for our Shut-in and Nursing Home resident:

Mickey Andersen - Home
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn

"I've come to see the spiritual journey as the process of learning to let go and trust that everything we need to live out of our truest selves will be given along the way." K. Killian Noe, Living as Though We Belong to Each Other



Does everyone have a need to give?

Gordon Cosby, the founder of The Church of the Saviour, told about a deeply moving experience he had related to that question. While serving in a small town in Virginia as a student pastor, the church deacons shared their concern with him about a woman with 8 children living on a \$40 a month welfare check. They were worried the \$4 she gave to the church each month was putting her family at risk and wanted Gordon to tell her that she didn't have to put anything in the offering.

When he shared their concern with her she started crying and said, "Almost everything that is important to me has been taken away from me. I have lost my husband, I have struggled to look after the children, and there are many things that I want to do that I cannot do. The one thing that has meaning in life for me is to be able to give to my church, and you are telling me now that I can't do it."

Gordon said he never recovered from that experience.

Are we wired for generosity?

I had a similar experience many years ago with an elderly woman who was living on \$186.00 a month. She gave \$18.60 to the church every month. I went and visited with her and she expressed her joy in being able to share her tithe each month. I learned that it is important to give and experience joy in giving.

I hope you will make every effort to support the ministry of our congregations. Your staff continues to care for the physical buildings, answer the phone and address the needs of our friends and neighbors and plan and prepare for the ongoing ministry. Can you be wired for generosity?

Pastor Laaker



Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic Update as it concerns our church activities

Our direct mail piece last week indicated that we would follow the Bishop's recommendations to suspend worship and activities for four weeks. Since then the Governor, the Mayor and the Douglas County Health Department have declared that all activities with more than 10 people need to be discontinued through the month of April. This means that we will not be having the opportunity to come together as the people of God for worship until the first Sunday in May.

I know this will create unique hardships for all of us. No joint celebration of Maundy Thursday, no joint solemn Good Friday, no joyous celebration of Easter. These are important and special occasions in our life's faith journey. We may simply plan an Easter celebration the first time we are permitted to gather once again in worship. In the meantime, I will do the best I can to create videos for our reflection for each Sunday and for those special days of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter and post them on You Tube. They can be accessed by opening a browser on your computer, typing in the search bar **youtube.com**, once it opens typing in **Grace Lutheran Church Omaha**. There you will find all the videos I will post. Please don't be disappointed that I have not created a second space under St. Luke's name, my son has helped me set things up this far.

I will be using Google Meet to conduct meetings with Councils and any other meeting needs. So, if you get an invite for a specific meeting, please follow the directions to connect at the appropriate time. If we do not have your email address and you are willing to share it with us, please send us a note via your email to one of the following: graceluth@graceluth.com, stlukes@stlukesomaha.org or damon@laaker.com.

Please do everything you can to be safe and avoid getting infected by this virus.

Pastor Laaker



A Season of Hope Personal Care Kits

This Lenten season, Lutheran World Relief invited congregations to reach out to our neighbors in the most fragile corners of the world and in the most challenging circumstances by assembling and shipping LWR Personal Care Kits. Listed below are the items (with a current count of each item) needed to fulfill our 35 Care Kit goal:

2 Bars of soap	35
Toothbrushes	40
Combs	14
Nail Clippers	13
Bath Towels	29

(between 20"x40" and 52"x27"), dark colors are recommended

Once we are reunited, plans will be made and all will be invited to stay after worship service and help assemble the Personal Care Kits.

POSTPONED:-(

ESL Classes, Sunday School, and Quilting are temporarily postponed.

Altar Flowers will not be needed in April, any payments that have already been made will go toward your next sponsor.

OTOC Fundraiser has been rescheduled on Sunday, August 16th from 4:00 - 7:30 p.m. at Omaha Design Center, 1502 Cuming. Tickets will remain at \$25 and can be purchased from Vicki. Tickets already purchased will be good on the new date.

We may not know the specific day or time that we will all be reunited as people of Grace Lutheran Church; we do know that God's Love is with us everyday!

**I FIND JOY IN
EVERY DAY, NOT
BECAUSE LIFE IS
ALWAYS GOOD,
BUT BECAUSE
GOD IS.**

Grace Lutheran Church has three additional ways that you could contribute without spending any out of pocket funds. Only a few moments of your time to download apps for TAGG - Together A Greater Good and when you shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0667089) Amazon will donate - Grace's unique link is: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0667089>. Register your Bakers Plus card with Kroger and choose Grace Lutheran as your charitable choice! All of these opportunities will match a certain percentage of your purchases and direct those funds to Grace.



Have You Included
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Endowment Fund
in Your Will?

A current, Remember the Church in Your Will, brochure has been placed on the back table in the sanctuary. Please pick up a free copy during your next worship time and consider Grace Lutheran a place for remembrance.

Update from the Nebraska Synod:



The Nebraska Synod's Disaster Response Team needs your assistance to continue to do the recovery work that will be ongoing for the next four to five years as well as the disaster preparedness work that will help make our communities even more resilient in the years to come. Please prayerfully consider if God is calling you to serve in any way, go to the website at nebraskasynod.org; follow the news & resources tab at the top of the website and scroll down to Nebraska Floods.

Prayers and donations for those impacted are always needed.

Donations made to Grace Lutheran Church with the memo line indicating "Nebraska Floods" will be forwarded to the Nebraska Synod office in support of the continuing cleanup efforts.

Loaves and Fishes Pantry

Grace Lutheran Church
1326 South 26th Street
402-341-7730

North Door (Parking Lot Door)
Opens at 9:45 am

Pantry is Open 10:00 - 11:00 am
Every Monday



Variety of fresh foods donated by
Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

All are served with love and care.

Staying within the CDC guidelines the Pantry continues to reach out to those in need on a weekly basis. During this time of reduced gatherings, clients of the Loaves and Fishes Pantry have been driving through the alley and picking up prepared sacks and bags of much needed food items. The Pantry is in need of additional bags and paper sacks to continue this community service, if you are able to donate please call the church office 402-341-7730.



Lutheran South Pantry
4401 South 23rd Street
402-502-7070

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 wipers, and Diapers, especially sizes 4, 5, 6 and pull-ups.

We always need paper or plastic bags.



**1 – Sarah Emery
Eva Martin
5 – Emily Bauer
7 – Linda Helm
8 – Elizabeth Koka
14 – Thomas Emery
23 – Julia Traynor**

Wishing you much happiness,
On this special day
And for the coming year
May blessings come your way.

Be thankful for each day you have
Thank God in heaven above
Fill your life with happy not sad
Remember you are loved.

The U.S. Census happens every 10 years. Your information is confidential and safe. It cannot be shared. The 2020 census counts everyone – all races, ages, citizens, and non-citizens. The 2020 census will not ask about your citizenship status. In Mid-March you will receive mail with instructions going on-line, by phone, 402-677-8794, or to request a paper form to be mailed to you. For additional information visit NebraskaCounts.org.



Thousands of Nebraskans are now voting by mail. The only way we win elections and end the current one-party rule of our state is to vote. Join fellow Democrats, Republicans and Non-Partisans (Independents) in growing the good life for all Nebraskans. You have the power to change our state. You can receive your Vote By Mail Application by going online at sos.ne.gov or by calling 402-434-2180. Deadline to receive your vote by mail is May 1st. Ballots will be sent out beginning April 6th. Last day to register to vote is April 27th. Primary elections are on May 12th.

Twelve Disciples' and Me?

*How many times in life I wondered if I would
have been a believer and follower of Jesus.*

Can you imagine walking this earth with your friends and God's son?
Watching him perform miracles day after day until each day was done.
Witnessing to sinners, turning water into wine, making blind men see.
As I have imagined throughout my life about adventures with Thee.

As I walked with them each day my faith became so strong.
I learned more about HIS love and what was right and wrong.
So when they came to get my Savior and hang him on that tree.
How could anyone deny or rebuke him, please say it wasn't me?

Would I have been like Peter and deny him ore' & ore' again.
Would I have been like Judas and betray my old dear friend.
We all knew HE was the son of God, sent from heaven above.
We've seen the glorious things HE's done and witnessed HIS love.

So then how could we deny him or betray him on that dreadful day?
But that's exactly what happened, when they took our Savior away.
I've had this dream many times and this query is always facing me.
"What would I have done?"
Would I have stood by my Lord or would I have also taken my leave?

*~ Bonnie May ~
Shared by Skywriting.net*

On Being a Blessing

"Many people find that they receive more benefit from being a blessing than from being blessed. Oftentimes, being a blessing requires nothing more than a word of encouragement and hope to someone who is filled with discouragement and despair."

*- John Marks Templeton, via Apple Seeds
Reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com*



from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
©Tim Oliphant
Reprinted with permission

A DOSE of HUMOR



Framed sign seen by Rev.
Jack F. Coffey of Raleigh, NC:

"LET THEM BE LITTLE

'cause they're only that way
for a while.
Give them hope,
give them praise,
give them love, every day.
Let them cry, let them giggle,
let them sleep in the middle.
Oh, just let them be little."



Jokes on this page shared by JoyfulNoiseletter.com

Bible Wordsearch

Wordsearch 295

Matt. 28:1-20

He Has Risen

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

AWAY ANGEL
DAWN AUTHORITY
FEET BAPTIZING
FIRST CRUCIFIED
HOLY ELDERS
KEEP FATHER
KNOW GALILEE
LORD GOVERNOR
MARY GUARDS
NAME HEAVEN
OBEY JESUS
PLAN LIGHTNING
RISEN MAGDALENE
SPIRIT MOUNTAIN
STOLE SABBATH
STONE SOLDIERS
TOMB TEACHING
TOOK VIOLENT
WEEK WORSHIPED

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

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

COPYRIGHT 2018

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Signs and Wonder

Sign seen in Kelley, IA:

"People tell me to follow my dreams, so I am going back to bed."

Sign outside First Presbyterian Church, Boone, IA:

"Body piercing saved our souls."

Sign outside Panther Creek Church of the Brethren, Adel, IA:

"Tweet others as you want to be tweeted."

~ all three via Rev. Dale Schoening, Madrid, IA