

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
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Omaha, NE 68105-2380  
402-341-7730

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Like us on Facebook at:  
[www.facebook.com/gracelutheranomaha](http://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranomaha)

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

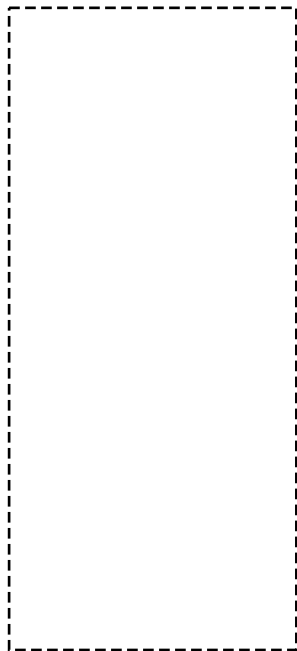
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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# THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2021



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

**Connect with us on the web: [graceluth.com](http://graceluth.com)**

## New Year's Message FROM THE PASTOR

Merry Christmas! We have just come through the most unusual celebration of Christmas in a lifetime. As we have observed through Luke's gospel story,

God does amazing things using those we might overlook.

In Luke's story, God's revelation of Jesus' birth came not to the wise and sophisticated but to humble and unlearned shepherds. The humble often are more ready to receive the essential truths of life than those preoccupied with sophisticated trivia. Like the prophets of old, Jesus often commended the humble, saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Later, Paul would emphasize a similar theme. "My brothers, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called. Few of you are men of wisdom, by any human standard; few are powerful or highly born. Yet, to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly, and to shame what is strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness. God has chosen things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order. And so, there is no place for human pride in the presence of God" (1 Corinthians 1:26-30).

This is the precise theme of the Gospels and Paul with respect to Jesus and his birth. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes of Christ: "For the divine nature was his from the first; yet he did not think to snatch at equality with God, but made himself nothing, assuming the nature of a slave. Bearing the human likeness, revealed in human shape, he humbled himself, and in obedience accepted even death -- death on a cross" (2:6-8).

Therefore, Luke states with great beauty and simplicity one of the central truths of the Christian gospel -- namely, that God is able to work through the humble and open and simple people as well as through the worldly wise.

I believe God has provided us the opportunity to work among the humble and open and simple people. By no means is this meant as a put down. I am amazed at the marvelous work that God is able to do in and through each of us. I trust that God will continue this work in 2021.

Happy New Year  
Pastor Laaker



## Worship Update in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Dear friends,

The Councils of Grace Lutheran and St. Luke's Lutheran rejoice in the news that the vaccine for Covid-19 is now beginning to be distributed in the community. We look forward with hopefulness that this distribution will proceed undaunted. However, the plans for distribution indicate that it will be Spring or early Summer before enough people are vaccinated to make it safe for all activities to resume. Therefore, we will continue to observe our virtual only sharing of Sunday Worship on YouTube. Please know that we want to see all of you when it is safe to do so. Please continue to observe all the Covid-19 precautions. God Bless!

We are grateful for you and your commitment to caring for one another.

Be blessed, and stay safe,  
Pastor Laaker and your Council Members



The Annual Meeting of Grace Lutheran Church will take place on Sunday, January 31, 2021, 1:00 p.m. This meeting will be held virtually. It is important that we have adequate representation at the meeting for a quorum to conduct our necessary business. If you have internet connection and would like to connect via Google Meet, the link for connection is: [meet.google.com/rmo-kriv-yqr](https://meet.google.com/rmo-kriv-yqr).

If you are connecting by phone it is:

Join by phone  
(US) **+1 432-955-6371 PIN: 241 068 789#**

Please make every effort to connect for our annual meeting.  
Grace Lutheran Council



## 2020 Council Members

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

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Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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The regular virtual meeting of the council was held on December 8th. Council members shared prayer concerns for persons ill and awaiting surgery and for our leaders as the changes take place over the next month or two.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “*Daily Texts*” from Joel 2:1 and 2 Peter 3:13. The first says that the day of the Lord is near. The second reminds us that God has promised a new heaven and earth where righteousness is at home.

Visions for Ministry: We reviewed chapter 7 talking about the balance between togetherness or separateness. Our behavior in relation to reactivity can have a profound impact on how we relate and work with others. It can be challenging to find that balance, which in essence helps you find your true self. Read Chapter 8 for next month.

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

Christian Education and Evangelism/Outreach: no new report.

Finance: Immanuel Vision - Our grant request of \$5500 for the Gifts of Purpose project was approved. The first week of gifts were distributed to the individuals/families who came through the pantry this week.  
PPP - request for forgiveness has been submitted.

Property: We are still dealing with some vandalism in regards to capstones being removed and thrown into the alley.

Service/Social Ministry: Thrivent - Give Thanks and Give Back - We more than met our goal with 738 pantry items donated and we will be receiving \$500 from Thrivent.

Support/Stewardship: Fall program has concluded and we are waiting for response cards to be returned.

Worship: Continuing with worship online - numbers continue rising so we will continue remotely. Council will continue to meet virtually through January.

Candle project - in an effort to connect through our Christmas Eve service, we purchased a candle for church members to pick up and light during the singing of Silent Night.

Colleen has agreed to play a flute solo for the service.

Unfinished Business: none.

New Business: Annual Meeting - will plan to hold it virtually with electronic documents, or offer the option of picking up a report beforehand.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 7:53pm.

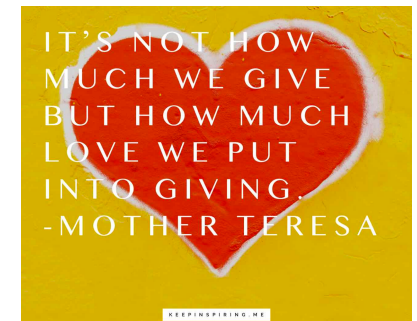
Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

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Dear Grace Lutheran,

Thank you! In spite of recent unimagined challenges we want to thank you for your continued support to Mission Share, which continues to do God’s work in your community, in Nebraska, and around the world. We are grateful for your ministry and partnership. With God’s blessings on behalf of the whole Nebraska Synod:

Brian	Timothy
	Morgan
Diane	Tyler
	Steve      Megan
Juliet	Sunni
	Lisa      Brenda
Michele	Stephanie
	Sarah



*Continued...*



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  
Carolyn Matson  
Sue Mize  
David Nange  
Marilyn Van Ormer



Andrew Edwards  
Susan Miller  
Amber Morlan  
Pam Reents  
Urbano Vasquez



**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



Please PRAY for those affected by COVID-19



Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for the very generous and kind gift that you gave to me at Christmas. Your generosity always amazes me. I am blessed by your kindness. Mary and I are so appreciative of the ways that you surround us with love. Many thanks!

Pastor Damon and Mary Laaker



Thank you so much for the Hy-Vee gift card. It's such a pleasure to serve as organist of your church! I miss seeing you all and hope that we can be reunited for services in 2021. I hope that you all are doing well and staying safe.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity!  
Merry Christmas!  
Colleen



Thank you for the generous gift of the Hy-Vee gift card, it will come in handy at the Spahr household. I have enjoyed brief visits with friends who stop by the office and through phone calls. However, like so many, I am patiently waiting for the day when we will be able to safely worship and visit with one another once again.

Merry Christmas  
With Hopeful Faith in 2021  
Brenda,



## Gifts of Purpose

Immanuel Vision Foundation gave Grace a grant of \$5500 for the Gifts of Purpose project. Every Monday during December, gifts were given to families who came through the Loaves and Fishes Pantry. Looks of disbelief were shown on many faces which were quickly followed by sincere words of gratitude and appreciation! Many individuals expressed blessings to volunteers handing out special gifts of purpose!

### Gifts given:

Week 1: Crockpot, cookbooks, seasoning and recipe cards

Week 2: Cookie mixes, utensils, mixing bowl and cookie sheet

Week 3: Blanket, scarf and gloves

Week 4: Dish towels, wash cloths, Cocoa/cider, mug/to go cups, and marshmallows

Each week a Bible verse and note of encouragement was included.



Dear Grace Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for your generous donation to the Liberty Holiday assistance program. With the donations we've received we were able to provide extra food to more than 45 Liberty families. We appreciate you!

Kristin Wagner,  
Social Worker  
Liberty Elementary School



**1 – Nenchi Ilka**

**13 – Joel Gammon**

**23 – Theila Nyiwe**

**26 – Janet Hula**

**31 – Gerald Helm**

**Bobby Stechenfinger**

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.

2021 Calendars are in the office.  
Calendars are sold at the great bargain  
price of \$5.00. To purchase your copy,  
please call the church office at  
402-341-7730 to arrange a time to  
pick up your calendar.



## Sign on Main Entrance to Grace Lutheran Church:

### Covid-19 Notice



Grace Lutheran Church is taking necessary precautions by cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing. We cannot completely eliminate the risk of exposure, however. By participating in activities in this location, you are however assuming risk that may result in exposure to infectious and communicable diseases.

Please honor one another by wearing a mask and observe social distancing.



## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Lutheran Disaster Response brings God's hope, healing and renewal to people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the United States and around the world. When the dust settles and the headlines change, we stay to provide ongoing assistance to those in need.

The Lutheran Disaster Team has been present during recovery efforts of the California wildfires, Hurricanes in the Gulf region, Monsoon rains in India, the explosions that rocked Beirut and the list goes on....

Your donation to the Lutheran Disaster Team helps to continue their efforts to provide God's hope, healing and renewal to all those in need.



Prayers and donations for those impacted are always needed.



Donations made to Grace Lutheran Church with the memo line indicating "Lutheran Disaster Response" will be forwarded to the Nebraska Synod office in support of the many efforts ongoing right now.

Dear Lord,

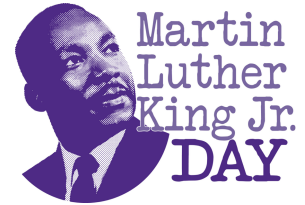
Today, we pray for your peace. We pray that the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard the hearts and minds of all healthcare workers. We also ask for courage. We remember that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind. Please, grant all healthcare workers your spirit of courage. Grant them a sound mind as they make decisions. We pray for all the physicians, nurses, and health care providers involved in this situation. May they be blessed with the wisdom and grace needed to provide the best care possible.

In His name, Amen.



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. I have decided to stick to love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

~ Martin Luther King Jr.



Monday, January 18, 2021

"I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word."

~ Martin Luther King Jr.



Grace Lutheran Church has some additional ways that you could contribute without spending any out of pocket funds.

Take a few moments of your time to download the app for TAGG - Together A Greater Good; they partner with several community business. Take a snapshot of your receipt and that business will donate 5% to a charity of your choice (Grace Lutheran).

**While holiday shopping online at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) you can designate Grace as your charity of choice and Amazon will donate a percentage of your purchase to Grace.**

Register your Bakers Plus card with Kroger and choose Grace Lutheran as your charitable choice!

Saving your Family Fare, Bag & Save, No Frills, Fresh Market and SunMart receipts will benefit Project Hope. For every \$150,000 in receipts collected, Project Hope receives \$1,000 to use for dairy products. They recently received their second check for \$1,000 and are now collecting for the next \$150,000 in receipts. Receipts will be mailed to Project Hope monthly.

## Words to start the New Year

The key to a better life:

Complain less, appreciate more.  
Whine less, laugh more.  
Talk less, listen more.  
Want less, give more.  
Hate less, love more.  
Scold less, praise more.  
Fear less, hope more.

~ Michael Josephson



"Having a sense of humor has served me more than it has hurt me, just in the sense that it has allowed me to keep my sanity."

~ De De Myers

"When you rise in the morning, form a resolution to make the day a happy one for a fellow creature."

~ Sydney Smith (1845)

The six best doctors in the world: (1) sunlight, (2) rest. (3) exercise, (4) diet, (5) self-confidence, and (6) friends.

~ via George Goldtrap, Ormond-by-the-Sea, FL

"Count your life by smiles, not tears. Count your age by friends, not years."

~ Lois Ward, Port Townsend, WA

"In the New Year, write a new plan; turn a new page; follow a new direction; be a new person; radiate enthusiasm."

~ William Arthur Ward

"A good sweat, with the blood pouding through my body, makes me feel alive, revitalized. I gain a sense of mastery and assurance. I feel good about myself. Then I can feel good about others."

~ Arthur Dobrin, via Apple Seeds

"Embrace frugality. Frugality is just doing whatever it takes to spend less than you earn. What a novel concept!"

~ Mary Hunt, Columnist, "Everyday Cheapskate"

"The testimony of a good conscience is the glory of a good man; have a good conscience and thou shalt ever have gladness."

~ Thomas à Kempis (1471)

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## Loaves and Fishes Pantry

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

Pantry is Open 10:00 - 10:30 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, paper sacks and **egg cartons** to continue this community service, if you are able to donate please call the church office 402-341-7730.



Do you know of a family or individual in need of food assistance? Please share the Pantry information with them. You could be the link to helping someone's stress be a little bit less!



**FACE MASK  
REQUIRED**

Protect the  
volunteers,  
yourself and  
your family!

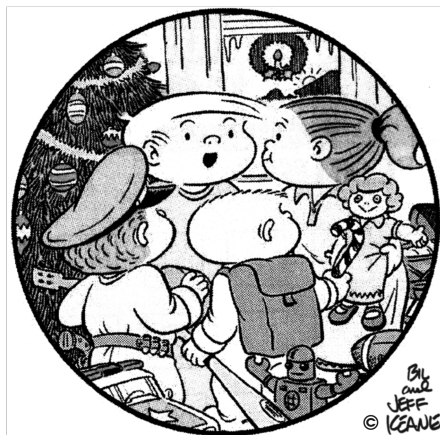


**Lutheran South Pantry**  
**4401 South 23rd Street**  
**402-502-7070**

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.**





"Today we get to start being normal again."

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com  
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## A New Year

*"Another fresh New Year is here... Another year to live!  
To banish worry, doubt, and fear,  
To love and laugh and give!*

*This bright New Year is given me  
To live each day with zest...  
To daily grow and try to be  
My highest and my best!*

*I have the opportunity  
Once more to right some wrongs,  
To pray for peace, to plant a tree,  
And sing more joyful songs!"*

— William Arthur Ward  
Apple Seeds

## Humor for the hard times

Email messages from seniors compiled by JN consulting editor  
Anglican Bishop David R. Francoeur of Palm City, FL:

~ ~  
"I really don't mind getting older, but my body is taking it badly."

~ ~  
"If you hear me talking to myself, I'm having a staff meeting."

~ ~  
"As I watch this generation try to rewrite history, one thing I'm sure of - it will be misspelled and have no punctuation."

~ ~  
"You drop something when you're younger, you just pick it up.  
You drop something when you're older, you stare at it."

— Rev. Barbara Bartholomew, Grace Lutheran Church, Wadsworth, OH

More quarantine humor, via Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, Dover, DE:

"It's been a great blessing to be at home with the wife these past few months. We've caught up on everything I've done wrong in the last 20 years."

Jokes on this page shared by JoyfulNoiseletter.com

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

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

PRISON	HEROD	FRUIT	FORGIVENESS
VIPERS	JOSEPH	MINISTRY	THIRTY
ZECHARIAH	ISAIAH	WILDERNESS	LUKE
SALVATION	JORDAN	DOVE	ABRAHAM
REPENTANCE	LOCUSTS	HONEY	JOHN
BAPTIZE			

*"O God our loving Father, help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus... that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Deliver us from evil by the blessing that Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven for Jesus' sake. Amen."*  
~ Robert Louis Stevenson