

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

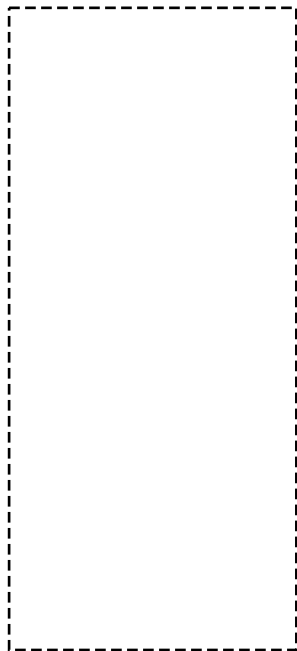
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2021




FEBRUARY



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



As I write this, we are putting the finishing touches on our 2020 Annual Report. It never seems possible that another year has come and gone. This past year has been one of unusual obstacles. Who would have guessed that we would experience a pandemic that would shut down many of our activities and force us to shelter in place. We soon will approach the one year mark of this need to shelter in place.

Last year, we began our observance of Lent with the usual activities. A meal and then an Ash Wednesday service wherein we were reminded of our humanity. We heard the words “remember you are dust and to dust you shall return” as the mark of the ashes was placed on our foreheads.

This year, while the observance of Lent begins on February 17 with Ash Wednesday, we will still be sheltered in place and not gathering together. There is no easy way to offer the mark of the ashes via YouTube. So, I would like to suggest that when you access the Ash Wednesday service on YouTube, you fill a cup with some water and when we hear the words “remember you are dust and to dust you shall return” mark your forehead with the water. This is a special reminder that in our baptism we are linked to Christ, who through death on the cross brings us new life through his resurrection.

We often imagine Lent as merely a time of somber self-sacrifice, but the gospel acclamation for Lent reminds us to return to God, who is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Repentance, as noted in baptism, is not a frightening appearance before an angry God, but a homecoming to one who longs to save us in the midst of our trials and fears.

So, as we enter this season of Lent, may it be a time to remember God’s covenant made with us in the water of baptism.

Continued.....

Please join me in this prayer: God of the covenant, you claim us in baptism and call us to be signs of your salvation. Bless the work of your church. You name each of us beloved; empower us to show love in all we do. May the loving presence of Christ lead us. God of promise, hear our prayer. Amen.

Blessings
Pastor Laaker



Worship Update in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Dear friends,

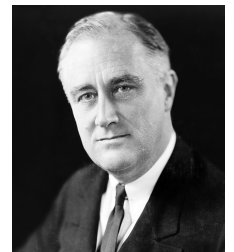
It is heartening to know that the vaccine for this virus is being distributed within the community. It is disappointing that it will take months for its widespread distribution to accomplish the necessary immunization of this community. So, let us wait patiently and willingly avail ourselves to the opportunity to be vaccinated.

We will continue to offer worship and meetings online while we wait. Please pray for those who have lost loved ones in this pandemic. Please stay safe. God’s promise is good. We are not alone.

Be blessed, and stay safe,
Pastor Laaker

"We must scrupulously guard the civil rights and civil liberties of others, whatever their background. We must remember that oppression, any injustice, any hatred is a wedge designed to attack our civilization."

— President Franklin Delano Roosevelt
On the FDR monument in Washington, D.C.



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2021 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 January 12th. Council members shared prayer concerns for our leadership and hopeful, peaceful transition of power, for a member's brother who was hospitalized, for all the people affected by COVID-19 and the frontline healthcare workers administering the vaccine.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Jeremiah 23:3 and Luke 15:4. The first says that the flock will be brought home where they will be fruitful and multiply. The second asks us who would not leave his flock to find the one sheep that was lost, reminding us that everyone is worth saving.

Visions for Ministry: We will review chapter 7 and 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: none

Evangelism/Outreach: Gifts of Purpose - provided 4 weeks of gifts to all who came through the pantry. Special thanks to all who helped with this effort. Morningstar Lutheran Church - reached out to Grace to learn about our community outreach programs.

Finance: Immanuel Vision Report - has been submitted for the Grace Reads Program at Liberty that we received last year.

Endowment Report - Council members ratified the Endowment Board's distribution request.

2021 Budget - Council prepared the budget for presentation at the annual meeting.

Continued...

Property: Little Library was vandalized again - the plexiglass was completely busted out. Pastor has reached out to Loren to see about reconstructing the door to prevent this going forward.

Service/Social Ministry: none

Support/Stewardship: 4th Quarter Giving Statement has been mailed.

Worship: Continuing with worship online - we will plan to meet with St. Luke's once we see an improvement in the pandemic numbers to discuss a plan to return to in-person worship.

Hymn Selection - meeting next Tuesday if anyone is interested in being a part of that.

Lent - begins February 17th.

Unfinished Business: Annual Meeting - January 31, 2021 Link is in the newsletter. Pastor will send the link via email, as well.

Council Resolution - Given the restrictions of the pandemic, the Council recommends that all members of the Council and Endowment Board continue in their positions throughout 2021.

New Business: Audit Committee - forgo this review for the year due to the pandemic.

Announcements: Closing prayers will be done alphabetically by first name going forward.

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

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

Thrivent Choice Dollars

We would like to remind you that you have until March 31 to direct Thrivent Choice Dollars earned in 2020. Log on to your Thrivent account and navigate to direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars. You can also call 800-847-4836 and when prompted, say Thrivent Choice.

These Thrivent Choice Dollars help your church or charity. Please direct your 2020 Choice Dollars now.



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



Stewardship (Feb 2021)

Experiencing the Joy of Generosity

In the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:3-9), there are different responses to the generosity of God. There those who choose to not respond. There are those who have an initial response but then turn away. And there are those who respond fully – at 100 percent.

When the soil of the heart is fully responsive to the message of God's generosity, the result is abundant, joy filled living (Mark 4:8). When we live abundant, joy filled lives, we do not worry about the necessities of life, i.e., food, clothing, or any other needs that we may have (Matt 6:33). We do not worry because our trust and our commitment are in our generous God who promises to provide for our needs (Phil 4:19).

Joy Filled disciples who live their lives with a belief in the abundance of God create joy filled and generous church communities.

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.

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

Souper Bowl of Caring



Since 1990, the Souper Bowl of Caring has collected over \$163 million with 100% providing hunger relief in local communities. Over 300,000 groups, including churches, schools, businesses, organizations, and individuals have helped our efforts to tackle hunger in local communities across the country. The Souper Bowl of Caring has empowered over 2 million youth to help tackle hunger in their communities.

Please consider donating non perishable items that will go to support the Loaves and Fishes and/or South Omaha Pantries. Souper Bowl Sunday is February 7th, please call the church office to schedule your donation drop-off!



6 – Joseph Koka
8 – Dustin Andersen
Brenda Spahr
9 – Destiny Perales
10 – Jackson Vazquez
24 – Hayden Bauer
25 – Graham Moyer
26 – Sandy Nielsen
28 – Scott Moore

Happy Birthday in faith and blessings be upon you! On your birthday, remember that you were wonderfully made by God and rejoice in his love. You are so blessed to be you and to share the amazing love of Jesus on your birthday! May God bless this day with more love than your heart can hold.

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

Wine & Roses 2021

In consideration of health & safety concerns surrounding COVID-19, the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter Ladies Auxiliary will not be holding an in-person Wine & Roses event this February.

However, we are pleased to announce that **McAleer/Pierce Memorial Scholarships** will still be awarded for 2021! If you would like to support this year's scholarship program, please consider making a donation by mail to:



Great Plains PVA
McAleer/Pierce Memorial Scholarship
7612 Maple St. Omaha, NE 68134

or donate through our website www.greatplainspva.org and mention the scholarship under special instructions.

Thank you and we hope to see everyone next year!



Lutheran
World
Relief

Neighbors in crisis need the essential items found in a Personal Care Kit now more than ever to help protect vulnerable families from Covid-19. The Lutheran World Relief warehouse shelves are nearly empty, and it is a challenge trying to keep up with demands. All congregations are invited to make the LWR Personal Care Kits!

Lent may be a time of waiting and darkness, but it need not be one of inaction and hopelessness. This Lenten season, together we can announce to the world that Christ makes a new season possible: A Season of Hope.

Grace Lutheran Church will be gathering donated items to assemble 35 additional Personal Care Kits this Lenten season. Each kit includes:

Bar of soap (each kit will need 2 bars)
Bath Towel (between 20"x40" and 52"x27"),
dark colors are recommended
Toothbrushes, Combs, and Nail clippers

If you have any questions, please call the church office, 402-341-7730.



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 tornado recovery efforts in Alabama, 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.



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 shopping online at smile.amazon.com you can designate Grace Lutheran Church 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.

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.

Groundhog Day Jokes

Q: What is a groundhog's favorite color?

A: MaHOGany

Q: What do you call a woodchuck with no legs?

A: A groundhog.

Q: What do puppies celebrate on February 2nd?

A: Ground-Dog Day.

Q: What did the groundhog say when the wolf grabbed his tail?

A: That's the end of me!

Q: How do woodchuck's greet their parents?

A: With hogs and kisses!



Presidential Quotes



"America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand."

~ Harry S. Truman

"Let me speak plainly: The United States of America is and must remain a nation of openness to people of all beliefs. Our very unity has been strengthened by this pluralism. That's how we began; this is how we must always be. The ideals of our country leave no room whatsoever for intolerance, anti-Semitism, or bigotry of any kind - none."

~ Ronald Reagan

"This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in."

~ Theodore Roosevelt

"My dream is of a place and a time where America will once again be seen as the last best hope of earth."

~ Abraham Lincoln

inspiremykids.com

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!



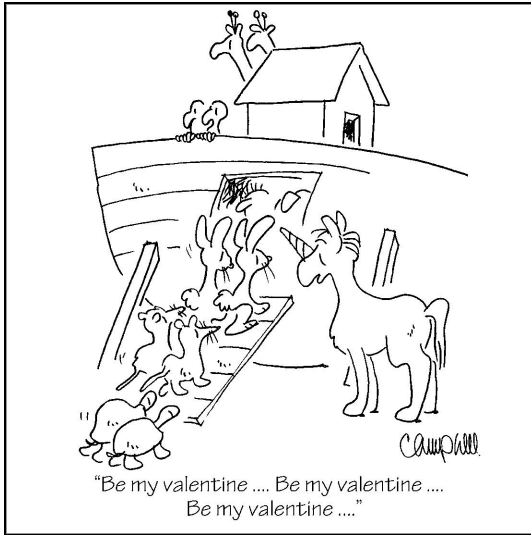
Lutheran South Pantry

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.



Valentine's Day Food Puns

Will you brie mine?
 There's so mushroom in my heart for you.
 You make miso happy.
 Will you peas be my Valentine?
 You're the loaf of my life.
 You've stolen a pizza my heart.
 We're mint to be.
 I love you from my head to-ma-toes.
 We make a great pear.
 I yam in love with you.
 I want to spend more thyme with you.
 Don't go bacon my heart.
 You're my everything bagel.
 Words can't espresso how much I love you.
 I love you a latte.
 Here's my number, so kale me, maybe?
 Hey Valentine, you're a gouda one!
 I donut what I would do without you.
 Olive you so much.

shared from goodhousekeeping.com



Matchless Love

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

It was matchless love that found me,
 When the bands of sin had bound me,
 It was love that planned escape for me
 When I was lost, undone;
 It was love in sad plight, saw me,
 It was love that reached out for me,
 'Twas the precious love of Jesus Christ
 The mighty, holy One.

MATCHLESS	UNDONE
LOVE	PLIGHT
FOUND	REACHED
BANDS	PRECIOUS
BOUND	JESUS
PLANNED	CHRIST
ESCAPE	MIGHTY
LOST	HOLY

"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