

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
1326 South 26th Street  
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

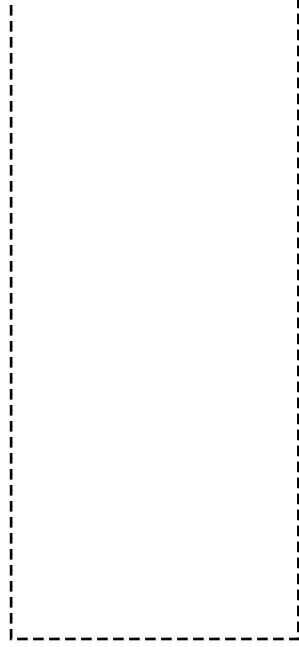
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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# THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2021



  
March



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)**



We have now entered the season of Lent. I decided to choose a worship product that focused on a special theme. The theme for the services on Ash Wednesday, the five Sundays of Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Easter will be “God’s Love Is Shown.”

This worship series delves into the rich and diverse aspects of our Lord’s love for us shown most clearly in the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. Each service focuses specifically on a meaningful descriptor of God’s love and applies that description to the words and actions of our Lord who is God’s love incarnate come down to save us.

On Ash Wednesday we looked at the redemptive nature of the love our Lord has for us. God redeems us from sin, death and hell that we might be in own forever. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for the First Sunday of Lent we looked at the compassionate nature of the love our Lord has for us. God feels for us in our need and takes measures to help us out of our despair. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for the Second Sunday of Lent we looked at the steadfast nature of the love our Lord has for us. God keeps on caring for us through thick and thin and never stops holding us close. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for the Third Sunday in Lent we will look at the enriching nature of the love our Lord has for us. God’s love fills us with good things and helps us to grow and develop into the people God wants us to be. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for the Fourth Sunday in Lent we will look at the living nature of the love our Lord has for us. God’s love enlivens us to carry out God’s will with energy and share God’s love wholeheartedly. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for the Fifth Sunday in Lent we will look at the holy nature of the love our Lord has for us. God’s love is set apart to divinely inspire God’s people to love beyond all human love. In this, God’s love is shown.

In our service for Palm Sunday, we remember that Hosanna means “save us.” Little did the people who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem know just how he would save them—by going to the cross. There his love would be truly shown.

*Continued.....*

In our service for Maundy Thursday, we remember that Jesus gave his great mandate on this day to love one another and he showed that love by selflessly washing his disciples’ feet and giving of himself in bread and wine.

Our Good Friday service will feature short reflections from a number of our cluster clergy as we reflect on John’s Gospel reading.

In our service for Easter Sunday, we will remember the joyous nature of God’s love, revealed to us in the good news the angel spoke at the empty tomb, “He is not here. He is risen, just as he said.” In this, God’s love is shown.

May we experience the wonder of the love shown to us through the amazing grace of God’s love. May our Lenten experience be enriched by the love of God.

Pr. 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



**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 February 9th. Council members shared prayer concerns for everyone affected by COVID-19, vaccine availability to teachers and support staff, those who don't have access to shelter during this cold weather, and the leadership of our country.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Psalm 56:10 and 2 Timothy 1:14. The first says that we should praise God's work. The second tells us to guard the good treasure entrusted to us.

Visions for Ministry: Continuing in our book Uproar, we reviewed chapter 7 and talked about chapter 8. The author talks about the importance of boundaries and how they provide safeguards for the success of a group. When boundaries get blurred, people lose sight of principles and lack courage to do what is right when it isn't easy or comfortable. He explains that a system cannot rise above the maturity of its leaders, so it will match their immaturity. Read chapter 9 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: none.

Finance: PPP loan: received letter from the bank that our loan was forgiven.

Property: Little Library: Loren replaced the window with painted wood, so it is secure again.

Continued...

Service/Social Ministry: Loaves & Fishes Pantry: Thank you poster was put up outside and patrons shared their thoughts and appreciation for the pantry.

Support/Stewardship: ELCA Congregational Report Synod Ambassador opportunity

Worship: Continuing Online: Will continue online until the vaccine becomes more readily available. Lent: Ash Wednesday is February 17th. Cluster clergy met and decided they will each prepare a service for 1 week and the links will be shared among the churches to cover the Lenten season.

Unfinished Business: none

New Business: none

Announcements: none

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary



**Coping with COVID-19**

*"We all know the benefits of joy in our lives, this being The Joyful Noiseletter. Joy boosts our immune system, is good for our circulatory and nervous systems, helps reduce stress, puts life and things in perspective, and just a smile can lower your heart rate. All this and much more. Laugh and smile as much as you can; it makes this pandemic time more bearable and reduces stress. Remember that God is with us always, loves us in the most amazing way, and fills us with delight. May we remember that the joy of the Lord is our strength. May joy be a part of our lives throughout even this pandemic, for joy is a gift and grace of God. We will get through this together - with God and one another."*

~ Rev. Barbara Bartholomew, Grace Lutheran Church, Wadsworth, OH  
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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:

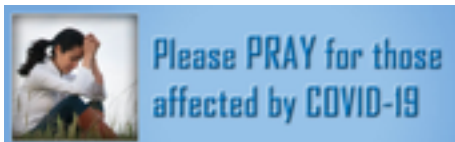
Pastor Damon Laaker, Grace Lutheran Church  
Bishop Brian Maas, Nebraska Synod  
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

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



**Stewardship**



**Fearless, Generous Mission Support**

Fearless generosity finds its source in the nature of God's work in today's world. Luke wrote of the work of Jesus with words attributed to Jesus himself as he quoted Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

We understand that Jesus' work is also the ministry and mission of the church in the world today. Whether the particular work is evangelism, church planting, education, medicine, agriculture, disaster relief, refugee resettlement, ministry to the homeless, etc., it is the work of God and deserves our generous prayer and generous financial undergirding. In some cases we may even be generous with our time and presence as we personally engage in mission.

Let us be fearless in our generous giving. May the Lord lead us to generosity and to community-changing mission.

**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.

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 LWR Personal Care Kits!



At the start of the school year, LWR's local partner Food for the Hungry organized a distribution of LWR Personal Care and School Kits for children and their families.

The Personal Care Kits are used to teach children proper hand washing and dental hygiene.

"What I appreciate the most... is to see that every kit comes with its own personal touch, which helps us reflect with the students and their parents that behind every kit is a family far away that they may never meet...happy to know that they are contributing to their education and helping them achieve their dreams," says Angelica Villatoro, FFTH's Guatemala country director.

Lent may be a time of waiting, 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

Drop off donations can be made Monday through Friday from 9:30a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. through noon. If these options do not work for you, please call the church office (402) 341-7730 to arrange the best time to meet and drop off your donations safely.

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



- 9 – Andrew Edwards
- 12 – Mary Laaker  
Carolyn Matson
- 13 – Hannan Koka
- 14 – Suata Lewa
- 16 – Martina Koka
- 19 – Craig Helm
- 21 – Catlin Cuffe
- 22 – Marsha Moyer  
Regina Lewa
- 27 – Abigail Hegarty

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.



Table Grace requests your presence Friday, March 5th, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. for their first virtual fundraiser which will benefit the ministries of Table Grace Cafe. Tickets can be purchased at [nhbs.cc/2021gala](http://nhbs.cc/2021gala). Virtual Gala at [nhbs.cc/facebook](http://nhbs.cc/facebook); Auction site at [nhbs.cc/gala2021](http://nhbs.cc/gala2021).



There are two menu options; pick-up March 1 - 5 Take and Bake option is Chicken Bacon Baked Penne Carbonara and German Chocolate Brownies. Pick-up the day of Gala is Baked Apple Goat Cheese Crostini, Maple-Bourbon Glazed Ham Balls, Seared Beef Tataki, Prosciutto Roulade with Greek Yogurt and Fruit Compote, Pesto Chicken Salad Tea Sliders and for Desserts: Mexican Chocolate Cake Bombs and Berry Clafoutis with Brown Butter Sauce.

Please reserve your tickets today to insure your dinner choices. If you have any questions, please call Simone at 402-965-1276.

Table Grace Ministries is a 501c3 whose Mission is "Nourishing hungry bodies and souls."

This year's Virtual Fundraiser is in memory of Sean Blake.



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.

“Do not behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but assume responsibility for it, taking all care that everything stays healthy and integrated so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us.”

~ Pope John Paul II

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2020 Year in Review

Impact Stats:

1,278 Clients served with only 24 cases of Covid-19 out of 1,278 people served in 2020. A 1.8% positivity rate in 9 months.

Average Shelter Stay - 33 Days; Meals Served - 203,472

89% of Clients moving to Positive Housing Destinations

30,000 Hours of Volunteering (Savings of \$390,000)

Donation Center provided items to 68 households moving into housing.

The real impact is measured in the smiles of people who have experienced homelessness, addiction or poverty as they find stable housing for themselves and their loved ones. Remember, there is a person behind each number listed above, and a life that is better because of your support. Thank you!



Handy Numbers to Keep

**Mayor's Hot Line - 402-444-5555** to report Graffiti, Cars, junk, trailers on public or private property; Empty buildings, vacant houses, deteriorated buildings; City Services - information or complaints.

**Street Maintenance - 402-444-4919** Snow removal information and complaints. Pot holes, debris, litter blocking streets.

**Garbage Collection - 402-444-5238** Trash, recycling complaints and/or information.

**Police Department** For Emergency call 911;  
Non-emergency line - 402-444-5600  
To make a crime report - 402-444-4877

**Fire Department - 402-444-3560** Smoke Detector Installation and Check Program.

**MUD - 402-554-7777** Gas leaks, water line breaks

**OPPD - 1-800-554-6773** Street lights out, electrical wires down, no power.

*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!



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.**

# Ride On, Ride On in Majesty



Sign seen in a Maryland store. "This too shall pass. It might pass like a kidney stone, but it will pass."

~ Lorene Irving,  
Lutherville Timonium, MD

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THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"If an apple a day keeps the doctor away, how many days do I get for an apple pie?"

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com  
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"The secret to living well and longer is: eat half, walk double, laugh triple, and love without measure."

~ Tibetan proverb

Jokes on this page shared by JoyfulNoiseletter.com



First Day of Spring  
Saturday, March 20th



Daylight Savings begins on  
Sunday, March 14th

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



Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;  
O Savior meek, pursue Thy road  
With palms and scattered garments  
stowed.

RIDE	PURSUE
MAJESTY	ROAD
HARK	PALMS
TRIBES	SCATTERED
HOSANNA	GARMENTS
SAVIOR	STOWED
MEEK	

