

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

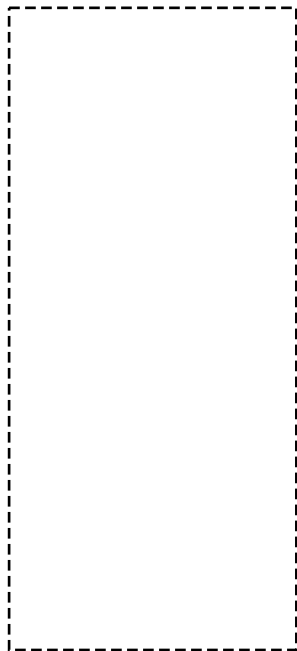
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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THE GRACE MESSENGER

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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



Throughout the season of Lent, we have been focusing on “God’s Love is Shown” as a theme. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. On, Palm Sunday we heard 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.

In our service for Maundy Thursday, we will recall 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 service for Good Friday, will feature cluster clergy reflecting on sections of John’s Gospel, chapter 18:1-19:42. God’s Love is shown through the cross.

In our service on 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.

A couple weeks ago, Richard Rohr shared this reflection on God’s love. “We’re told by developmental psychologists that there’s a staging in our growth in love. We have to start with self-love and respecting the self. If we don’t respect ourselves, we won’t know how to respect anybody else.

“Then God moves us to group love, family love, which is basically the love of people who are connected to us or who are like us. A lot of people don’t even get there. They don’t know how to love their family or those close to them or those in their group.

“From there, God moves us to the third level, which is universal love; I’m afraid a much smaller number of people get to this place. As we see in politics, in our country, and throughout the world, at best most people just get to the second stage of knowing how to love people who are like them: their race, their nationality, their religion, their political party. When we stay at this second stage of group love, we clearly don’t create a healthy society. We see this in the rise of white nationalism and the violence at the U.S. Capitol that took place earlier this year. Many of us who identify as white in the United States are just coming to understand that it was this second level of exclusive love for our own group that was the foundation for most of the oppressive systems of our nation.

Continued.....

“In Acts 10 we see how even the so-called first pope, Peter, had to be taught by the Holy Spirit how to grow in love. Peter was at the stage of group love, believing that God only loved the Jewish people. And then this strange thing happened where the Holy Spirit fell upon Gentiles! Peter looked around and said, “Oh my gosh! God seems to be for everybody and not just for the Jewish people!” He understood that it was okay to include Gentiles into what we eventually called the church. In spite of this, most of church history has not really imitated Peter’s insight. We pulled back into group think and group love.

“Peter said, “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. In any country, whoever fears God and acts uprightly is acceptable” (Acts 10:34–35). At that moment he became both a Jewish and Christian heretic! Peter himself began to recognize that God works with all people of goodwill—not just people in his group. But he had to be pushed there. Little by little, God leads him to universal love.”

May God lead us to live love in all aspects of our life. May we find great joy in God’s Love shown to us.

Pr. Laaker

Worship Update in the Covid-19 Pandemic

Dear friends,

We rejoice that the vaccine rollout here in Douglas County has provided immunization to those 65 and older. We hope that the plans to begin offering the vaccine to those younger continues without interruption. We are hopeful that the efforts to get all adults vaccinated by May becomes a reality. Please continue to sign-up when it is indicated and get your vaccination. The sooner we all get vaccinated the sooner we can return to in-person events.

Our hope is that the weather, as initially reported, will be nice for Easter. Our Councils have indicated a desire and willingness to offer an outdoor worship on April 4, Easter Sunday, at 10:30 am on the lawn at St. Luke’s. We may be able to offer other Sunday worship experiences outside if the weather permits. In the meantime, we will continue to offer worship opportunities online via You Tube.

Please pray for those who have had loved ones die during this pandemic. Please pray for those who have had long term after effects from this disease. Please stay safe. God’s promise is sure. We are not alone.

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 March 9th. Council members shared prayer concerns for everyone affected by COVID-19, individuals fighting cancer, an individual needing knee surgery, a baby whose humorous bone broke during birth, and families grieving the deaths of family members.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “Daily Texts” from Micah 7:8 and 1 Thessalonians 5:5. The first tells us that God is a light to us when we are in the darkness. The second tells us that we are all children of light.

Visions for Ministry

Review chapter 9 and read chapter 10 for next month.

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

Christian Education: none

Evangelism/Outreach: Grace Reads - working on getting started again with Liberty Elementary later this month.

Finance: Leeka Thank You - expressed gratitude for the support for getting a church building built in Mabaan, South Sudan. Ralph motioned to ratify the Endowment Board’s request for distribution from the Disney fund. Donna seconded. Motion carried.

Property: Water in Basement along west wall again - thanks to all who helped manage it. We have a bid for work to prevent this from happening again. Amanda motioned and Tom seconded to move ahead with option #1. Motion passed.

Trees in Entry - Arlone motioned and Brenda seconded to remove the trees in the entryway. Motion passed.

Continued...

Service/Social Ministry: Sister congregation conversation about pantries- pantries offered almost every day of the work week between the various churches.

Personal Care Kits - we will continue to collect items for assembling personal care kits. If you want to donate items, call the church office and Brenda will gladly accept donations. Towels, bars of soap, combs, clippers, toothbrushes, etc. Goal of collecting all items by Easter.

Omaha Together One Community - virtual meetings with City Council and Mayoral candidates, watch your email if you’re interested in taking part. Venetta, a regular pantry volunteer - asked if we might put together another peanut butter and jelly drive. Council members agreed.

Support/Stewardship: Synod Ambassador - still in need of someone willing to do this.

Worship: Continuing Online - until more people get vaccinated.

Lent/Easter - potentially hold an outdoor service for Easter, weather permitting

Unfinished Business: none

New Business: Voting Members for Synod Assembly - we can register 2 people for virtual assembly the first weekend in June.

Announcements: We will plan to meet in person for the April Council Meeting.

Brenda will prepare a prayer for next month.

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

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

Signs and Wonders

Sign outside a church:

“Accept what is, let go of what was, and have faith in what will be.”

~ via Paul Kurlowicz, St. Michael Lutheran Church, Portage, MI
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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



Please **PRAY** for those affected by **COVID-19**



Stewardship

Fearless Generosity – Estate Planning

Planning for the future and discussing financial matters is often unnerving for most of us. But it is not taboo and is not something to put off until later. Estate planning is the preplanning for the work that is often competed in a probate proceeding. Money spent in the estate planning process can reduce the cost of certain probate proceedings by 80 to 90 percent, not mention the substantial saving in emotional energy and family harmony.

Estate planning is something everyone needs to do, with particular emphasis at key points in life, such as marriage, the loss of a loved one, the birth of a child, or a change in financial situations. A few years ago, we offered a seminar featuring Lutheran Planned Giving Services. Sarah Jank Callahan is the new executive director of Lutheran Planned Giving. She provides charitable gift planning services to individuals, couples and families. She can be reached at 402-342-5728.

Part of our responsibility as good stewards of what we have been given is to put financial plans in place. With God's help and credible advice of trusted leaders and financial advisors, we can do so with confidence.

Nebraska Synod Assembly Voting Members

Grace has the opportunity to have two members attend the virtual meeting of the Nebraska Synod on Saturday, June 5, 9 am-3pm.

The theme of the Assembly is "We Are One." This theme comes from John 17:11, which reads "so that they may be one, as we are one." It is under this theme that we will remember and celebrate all that is made possible as God's people and through God's work with our hands, minds, hearts and whole selves.

Please contact Pastor Laaker to indicate your willingness to serve. He will register you so that you get the links necessary to participate.



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!



Often, when natural disasters strike or when war drives families from their homes, our hearts ache with compassion, but we don't know how to help. Making Lutheran World Relief Kits is a simple, fun and tangible way to offer comfort to those suffering and express love to our neighbors in need.

LWR Kits are specifically designed to help people coping with poverty, disaster, conflict and more. Whether a kit helps someone to maintain good hygiene, care well for a newborn baby, keep education going during a crisis or learn a new vocation, LWR Kits provide dignity and hope in the direst situations.

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 the listed options do not work for you, or if you have any questions, please call the church office (402) 341-7730 to arrange the best time to meet and drop off your donations safely.

The goal is to have donations collected by Easter Sunday, April 4th.



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

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.

Dear Lord, I want to let Your Truth sink deep down into my heart and soul today. Help me stay focused on You. And I pray for the many who will understand for the first time this Easter Sunday that You are risen. Wash over every soul with fresh hope and overwhelming joy. Bring new life as only You can. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



~ Lysa Terkeurst

Father, We are living in a day unlike anything we have ever seen before. Chaos, confusion, and turmoil has been stirring in the hearts of so many people.

We trust that justice belongs in Your hand, but we also trust that You have a great plan for us to see hearts transformed and lives changed.

Jesus, thank You for Your mercy that was displayed upon the cross that has given those who call upon Your name and trust in You for forgiveness and new life. We want to be a part of Your great redemptive plan in the earth.

Help us fix our eyes on Christ when we are tempted to only look at the problems around us. We are asking that You would give us the boldness to proclaim the only solution to what our world is experiencing and that is Your glorious Gospel! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

~ Emily Massey

Prayers shared by Christianity.com



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.



Earth Day Begins at Home



There are plenty of ways you can make every day Earth Day. Improve your own small part of the planet by considering these suggestions for spring-cleaning, garden preparation, and home improvements.

Purchase non-toxic cleaning products. Use natural fiber sponges and cleaning agents that are biodegradable, phosphate-free, chlorine-free, and unscented.

Reduce paper use. Use rags instead of paper towels; cloth napkins instead of paper ones. Buy post-consumer recycled paper and recycle it when you have used it.

Refurbish responsibly. Use water-based or vegetable-based paints, stains, and varnishes. Don't wash paint thinners, household cleaners, oil, or pesticides down the drain or pour them on the ground; use them up, give leftovers to friends or a charity, or dispose at your local toxic waste disposal center.



Repair instead of replace. Reupholster furniture. Resole your shoes.

Replace disposable goods with renewable ones. Buy rechargeable batteries. Use dishes instead of paper plates.

Plant for the planet. Strengthen your garden's resistance to pests by planting resilient plants, by rotating the fruits and vegetables you plant, and by attracting friendly bugs to prey on the pesky ones.

green tips from earthshare.org

Words of Wisdom

"Prayer is not a 'spare wheel' that you pull out when in trouble, but a 'steering wheel' that directs the right path throughout the journey."

"All things in life are temporary. If going well, enjoy it; they will not last forever. If going wrong, don't worry; they can't last long either."

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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.

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.

**Spread the Love by donating
Peanut Butter and Jelly.**



**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.



THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"...gonna find out who's naughty and nice - the Easter Bunny's comin' to town..."

Words of Wisdom

"Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, God smiles from above and says, 'Relax, sweetheart, it's just a bend, not the end!'"

"When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that someone has prayed for you."

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SUNRISE SURPRISE

The hidden surprise in these sweet rolls hints at the reason behind Easter's joy.

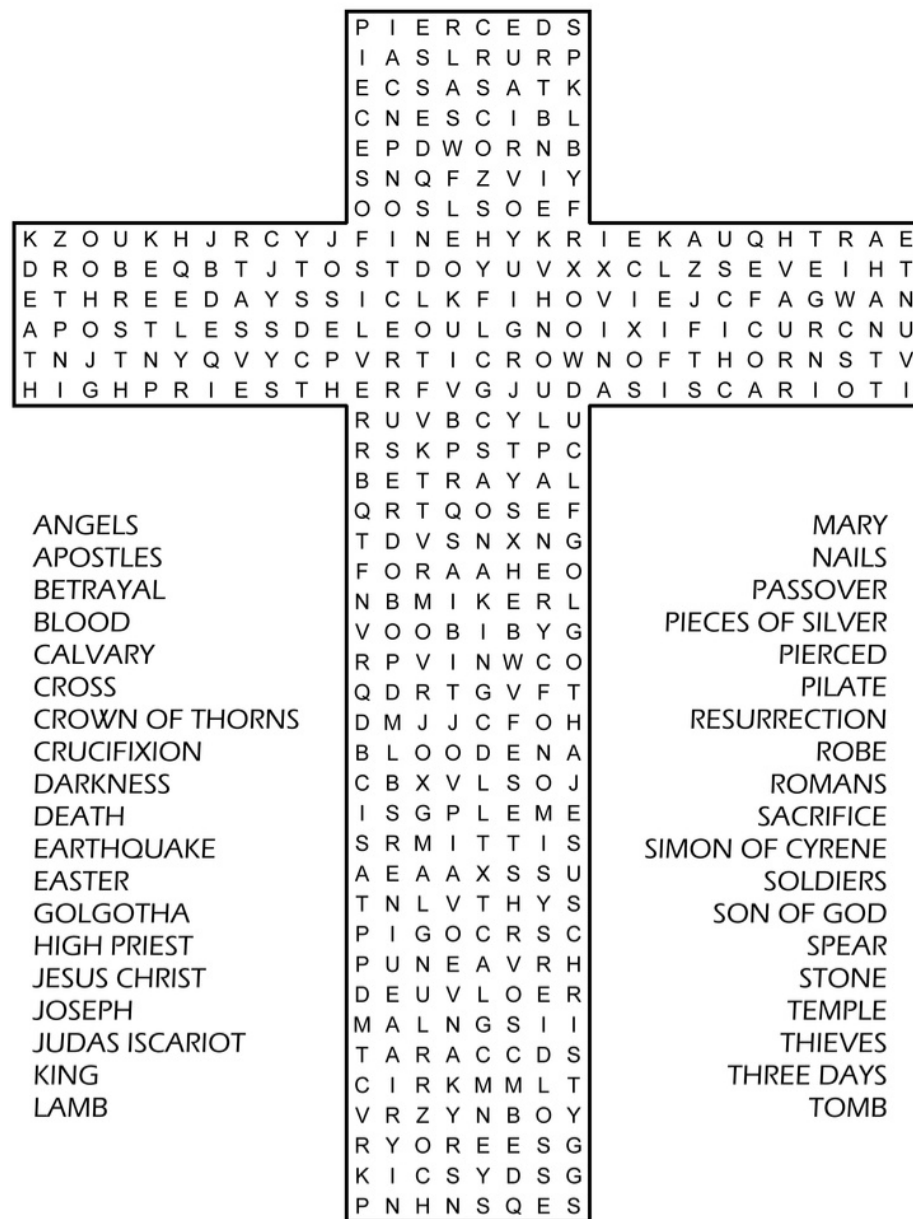
What you need:

- ½ cup chopped pecans
- 10 uncooked frozen rolls, thawed
- 10 large marshmallows
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup melted butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- Adult help

What you do:

1. Grease a round baking dish. Sprinkle pecans on the bottom.
2. Flatten each roll. Place a marshmallow in the center, wrap dough around it and pinch edges together.
3. Combine sugar and cinnamon. Dip each roll into melted butter and coat with cinnamon-sugar. Place in pan, seam side down.
4. Sprinkle brown sugar and remaining butter over rolls. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise 30 minutes.
5. Bake at 350 degrees until golden brown, about 30 minutes. Cool in pan.
6. As you bite into a roll, you'll see the marshmallow has melted, leaving an empty center — just like Jesus' empty tomb!

Easter Word Search



ANGELS
APOSTLES
BETRAYAL
BLOOD
CALVARY
CROSS
CROWN OF THORNS
CRUCIFIXION
DARKNESS
DEATH
EARTHQUAKE
EASTER
GOLGOTHA
HIGH PRIEST
JESUS CHRIST
JOSEPH
JUDAS ISCARIOT
KING
LAMB

MARY
NAILS
PASSOVER
PIECES OF SILVER
PIERCED
PILATE
RESURRECTION
ROBE
ROMANS
SACRIFICE
SIMON OF CYRENE
SOLDIERS
SON OF GOD
SPEAR
STONE
TEMPLE
THIEVES
THREE DAYS
TOMB

