

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

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

JANUARY SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 a.m. Worship Service
at St. Luke's Lutheran, 2315 "I" St.

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

Delivered to the Post Office December 31



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THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2022



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



Merry Christmas! We have gathered to celebrate the miraculous birth of Jesus — a time in which we reflect on the singular feeling of joy — even as we carry profound grief: the loss of loved ones, weariness as we enter into another year of a surging pandemic, isolation, and canceled plans. While it can seem impossible amid our fear and exhaustion, we are called to hold onto the joy of the newborn king — and honor the joyful moments we have experienced in a year filled with heartache.

The scientific miracle of effective vaccines made it possible for many families to gather this holiday season more safely than last year. I experienced great joy after vaccines for 5- to 11-year-olds were approved — and my grandsons were able to be fully vaccinated just in time for Christmas.

We saw small moments of joy as we began to meet once again in person. The next step was beginning fellowship time. It is a joyful feeling to sit and talk to one another in person.

Finally, my heart is full of joy to steward and work with our Council leadership, which includes the work of informing, inspiring, and equipping people to put their faith into action for justice and peace. While it can be a struggle to live with the disparity between the way things are and the way things ought to be, I'm grateful that we get to work together to co-create what ought to be: kingdom space that affirms human dignity and brings great joy.

May you and yours experience the profound joy of Christ's birth through this Christmas season as well as joy in many other ways new and old, expected and unexpected.

Thank you for all of the kindnesses and support you have given me throughout this challenging time. I rejoice in your love and care.

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 December 14th. Council members shared their prayer concerns for the people affected by the recent tornados, for those who will be affected by the storm tomorrow, people traveling during the holiday season, and those still fighting COVID.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “*Daily Texts*” from Psalm 119:19 and Ephesians 5:15-16. The first talks about living as an alien in the land. The second reminds us to be careful how we live and make the most of our time.

Visions for Ministry: We began discussion on the Post Quarantine Church. The author discussed the comparison between how we relate historic events to a specific date, whereas the pandemic seemed to happen over a period of time. The pandemic caused churches to re-evaluate how they operate, what they can do to reach outward to the community, and get creative on ministering to people both in and out of their church. Read Chapter 2 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: LVC - we will explore this possibility again for next year.

Finance: Endowment Report: The Disney distributions recommended by the Endowment Board were ratified.

Immanuel Vision Fund Report: The report is due by December 31st. Pastor completed and submitted it.

Vanco: we have the ability to set up texting or giving via other electronic means. Pastor will continue to explore these options.

Continued...

Property: Thanks to Loren who has repaired the wall downstairs around the pump. Getting floor tile down will be the next project.

Service/Social Ministry: Give Thanks and Give Back: We had almost 600 items donated, so we will receive \$500 for the pantry from Thrivent. We bought 41 chickens to combine with turkeys that were donated by Catholic Charities, and everyone who came through the pantry received at least one.

Support/Stewardship: None.

Worship: Worship: Christmas Eve services at 4:30 pm at Grace & 6:30 pm at St. Luke's.
Lent is late this coming year, beginning in March.

Unfinished Business: Nominating Committee

New Business: Annual Meeting - January 30th. Reports need to be in by January 16th.
Joint Meeting with St. Luke's Council - proposed for the last week of December.

Announcements: Janet will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

Grace Lutheran Annual Meeting

Following worship service at St. Luke's on Sunday, January 30th, please plan to attend in person at Grace, the meeting begins at noon. Keep watch in the bulletin for additional plans.

Everyone is encouraged to be present, hear all the events, activities and stories from 2021, and help make decisions for 2022!

Did you participate in an event that happened here or through Grace? Consider writing a report to be placed in the Annual Report. Please have your reports into the office by January 16th. Thank you.

Stewardship

Some years ago, we began to encourage one another to share something called a *God Moment*.

“God Moments” are short stories of how God has impacted us, and over the course of the day, the week, the month. As you think about your giving, are there God Moments that have surprised you? Encouraged you?

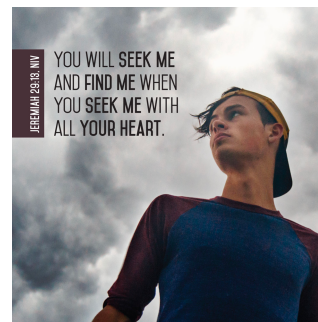
We just finished a season of Advent that was full of stories of God Moments that move us toward the ultimate God Moment: the inbreaking of God in the person of Jesus.

Here are a few places I hope you might share and invite the stewarding of God Moments this New Year:

1. At Bible study and other congregational small groups: by asking about what God might have been up to in their lives this past year.
2. At family gatherings: by asking for and telling family stories with relatives of all ages.
3. At church leadership meetings: by asking what God might have been up to in our congregation and our local community this past year.
4. In your prayer journal: by writing on the question, “Where might God have shown up for me and my community this year?”

May the New Year bring you many opportunities to recognize God Moments!

Pr. Laaker



thrivent®

Thrivent Choice Dollars

Members still have time to direct their Thrivent Choice dollars to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. Don't let the deadline of March 31st pass you by, direct your Choice dollars today. Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of Grace Lutheran Church.



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:

Mickey Andersen
Andrew Edwards
Carolyn Matson
Sue Mize
Pam Reents
Urbano Vasquez



Vicki Cox
June Hilmer
Susan Miller
David Nange
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.

Pray for our Shut-in and Nursing Home resident:

Mickey Andersen - Home
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills

Terry enjoys receiving mail, if you would like to brighten his day, please call the church office for his **new** address. Blessings!



In 1990, a simple prayer: "**Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat**" was delivered to a small youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC led by Brad Smith, who was serving as a seminary intern at the time.



This gave birth to an idea. **Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good?** Individuals and groups could collect dollars in soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation **DIRECTLY** to a local charity of THEIR choice.

The first year, they invited 22 area churches to join the team and collected \$5,700 with 100% of donations distributed to local-area charities.

That was 1990. Since then, Souper Bowl of Caring has become a national, grass-roots, youth-inspired movement where ordinary people are doing extraordinary good. **Over \$170 MILLION in dollars and food has been generated while benefiting thousands of soup kitchens, food banks, meal programs and other hunger-relief charities in local communities.**

Thousands of participants including: churches, schools, youth groups, community partners, grocery partners, local businesses, media partners, NFL teams and passionate individuals have experienced for themselves, the joy and satisfaction of giving, serving and inspiring people across the country to follow their generous example.

The 32nd Annual Souper Bowl of Caring is Sunday, February 13th, we plan to highlight the work and ministry of the Loaves and Fishes Pantry. All are invited to participate and bring a special collection that includes canned goods, paper products (toilet paper), or personal care items to donate to the ministry efforts to serve those in need within our community.



For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10



Thank you Mary and Amanda for your weekly dedication running the recording equipment every Sunday during worship service.



Thank you Ron, Donna and Brenda for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.



Thank you Mary, Janet, Donna, Ron, Eva, and John, for your dedication and help in assembling the monthly Grace Messenger!



Thank you to the Grace Reads Volunteers who go out and read to second graders at Liberty Elementary School on the second Wednesday every month.



Thank you Alma for keeping both Grace and St. Luke's clean and looking so welcoming to everyone who enters.



Thank you to all who decorated the sanctuary and other areas of the building in order to share the Christmas spirit!



Thank you to all Loaves and Fishes Pantry Volunteers; for delivering food items on Sunday mornings, unloading and putting food items away until Monday mornings, getting everything ready for Mondays and in greeting and serving all with smiles, care and love!

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

Lutheran Women of Omaha
Tuesday, January 11, 2022 - 12:00 Noon

Join us at St. Michael Lutheran Church, 13232 Blondo Street.
Program focus will be "Saved to Serve" with Mary Mayfield.
Free Will Offering will support Magdalene House.
Lunch is \$7.00.

Call Mardelle Gocek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, January 9th to reserve your seat.



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.

1 – Nenchi Ilka
13 – Joel Gammon
21 – Lorraine Brown
23 – Theila Nyiwe
26 – Janet Hula
31 – Gerald Helm
Bobby Stechenfinger



Project Hope, Inc.
6201 N 60th Street

Are you cleaning out closet space? Ready to donate a few clothing items? Consider donating to Project Hope, they continue to provide winter clothing and outer wear for those in need. Please check out their website at www.projecthopeomaha.org for suggested items in need. If you have any questions, please call Project Hope's office at 402-453-7649.

We are called to feed and clothe God's people in need. We believe nutritious food contributes to good health. We value people with love, hope, compassion and dignity.

During the month of December Grace has received multiple letters of Thanks for recent donations that have been made to the following organizations:

Immigrant Legal Center
Oaks Indian Mission
Project Hope, Inc.
Stephen Center



"Inspired by Christ, it is our mission to Share God's Word and Love in care and service to all."

Grace Lutheran Mission Statement



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 so that some businesses 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. Receipts will be mailed to Project Hope monthly.



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.

Lutheran Disaster Response strives to help the church continue to be church in the midst of disaster — following Christ's call to bring hope and healing to our neighbor in need. Some key areas of work include:

- Providing emotional and spiritual care for people who have been affected by a disaster and for leaders who respond to a disaster
- Coordinating volunteers through our local affiliates
- Assisting refugees in a holistic way by meeting the varied needs of the community
- Promoting disaster risk-reduction by helping communities build their assets thereby reducing the effects of likely disasters
- Providing long-term recovery efforts by addressing the unmet needs months or even years after a disaster strikes

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.

Loaves and Fishes Pantry

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

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, 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.



**FACE MASK
REQUIRED**

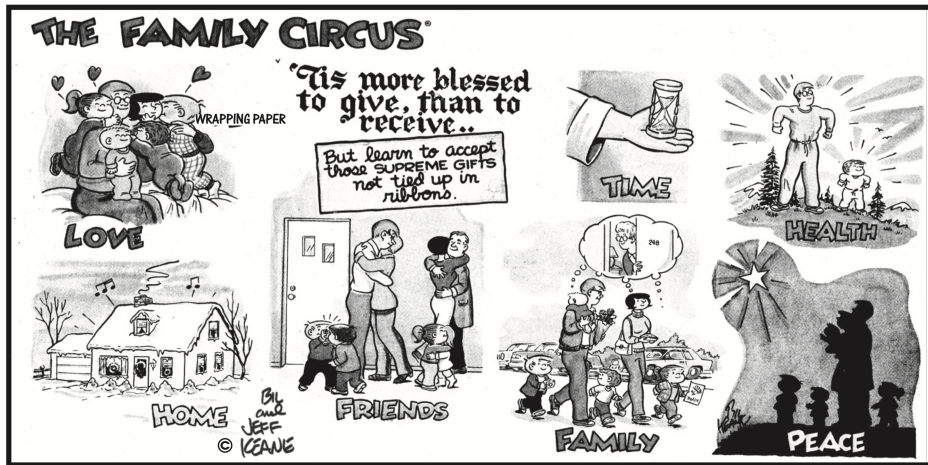
Protect the
volunteers,
yourself and
your family!



**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, Feminine hygiene products, Hair products (combs, brushes, picks), Bathroom tissue, Shampoo, Dry Laundry Soap, Hand Sanitizer, Sunscreen, Bug Repellent, Band-aids Diaper wipers, and Diapers, especially sizes 6 and pull-ups.

We always need paper or plastic bags.



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A New Year exercise plan:

- 1 - Exercise civility: to be civil in my encounters with others each day.
- 2 - Exercise courtesy: to be courteous to everyone, regardless of the situation.
- 3 - Exercise considerateness: to be considerate and anticipate the needs of others; to outdo others in doing good.



- Apple Seeds

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flock, the work of Christmas begins: To find the lost; To heal the broken; To feed the hungry; To free the prisoner; To rebuild the nations; To bring peace among brothers and sisters; and To make music in the heart.

- Howard Thurman, Asbury News, Minneapolis, MN

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The Visit of the Magi

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.
Matthew 2:11 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV).



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



PRIESTS	MYRRH	BETHLEHEM	KING	CHRIST
GOD	CHILD	HOUSE	INCENSE	MARY
STAR	MAGI	TEACHERS	WORSHIP	MOTHER
WORSHIPED	EAST	SEARCH	BORN	HEROD

Worship Update

January Sunday Worship Services will be held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 2315 "I" Street. Service begins at 9:30 a.m. Hope to see you here!

WORSHIP
with us