

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/gracelutheranoma

FEBRUARY SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 a.m. Worship Service

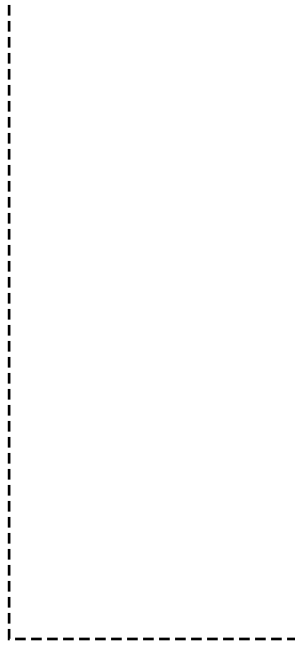
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office January 31



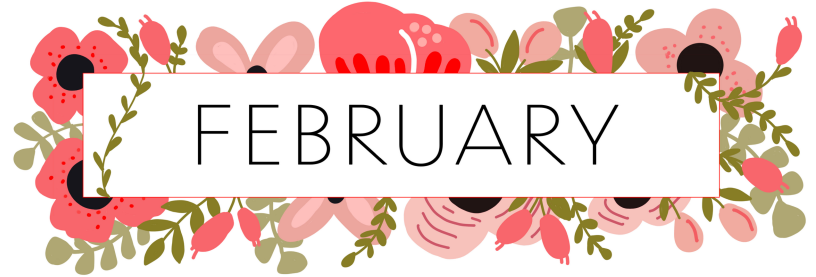
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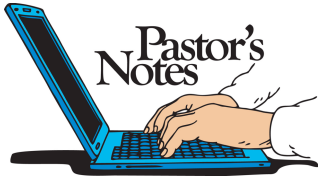
THE GRACE MESSENGER

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



In his daily meditation on January 24, Richard Rohr titled it “Goodness Exposed.” I find his thoughts engaging and wish to share them with you.

“The absolute religious genius of Jesus is that he utterly refuses all debt codes, purity codes, religious quarantines, and the searching for sinners. He refuses the very starting point of historic religions. He refuses to divide the world into the pure and the impure, much to the chagrin of almost everybody—then and now.

“Jesus is shockingly **not** upset with sinners. This is a shock so total that most Christians, to this day, refuse to see it. He is only upset with people who do not think they are sinners: these denying, fearful, and illusory individuals are the actual blockage. They are much more likely to hate and feel no compunction. Formerly, religion thought its mission was to expel sin and evil. Through Jesus, we learn that sin lies in the very act of expelling. There is no place to expel it to. We have met the enemy, and the enemy is us. We either carry and transform the evil of human history as our own problem, or we increase its efficiency and power by hating and punishing it “over there.” The Jesus pattern was put precisely and concisely by Paul: “for our sake he made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). I admit, that is counterintuitive for most people. Only mystics and sinners seem to get it.

“In the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), Jesus tells of a man by the side of the road waking up in enemy territory, realizing that he has been loved by the very one who is supposed to hate him and whom he is supposed to fear. Could this be everybody’s awakening? Could this be an accurate image of discovering God and truth? Jesus is clearly presenting the foreign Samaritan as an image of God. He ends the shocking parable by saying, “Go and do the same” (Luke 10:37). The human task has become the very imitation of God, which seems almost unthinkable. God, the one that history has been taught to fear, is in fact the utter Goodness that enfolds us and creates a safe and nonthreatening universe for us—a renewed universe that we can now pass on to others.

Continued.....

“For Jesus, there are no postures, group memberships, behaviors, prayer rituals, dietary rules, asceticism, or social awareness that, of themselves, transform us or make us enlightened, saved, or superior. There are no contaminating elements or people to expel or exclude. These answers are exposed as inadequate only when goodness is exposed as the divine field of action. Everyone and everything belongs.”

I find myself agreeing with him and recognizing how difficult it is to actually act in the way of Jesus.

Pastor Laaker

Stewardship 2030: A Return To Mission by Charlotte Linberry

Anyone in your congregation can probably tell you that they are regularly bombarded with requests from numerous nonprofits to donate to their causes. Why should they give to the church? Congregational stewardship over the next decade will require a renewed focus on the mission of the church. Simply asking members for money to meet the budget or fill the deficit is not an effective stewardship strategy. For starters, it doesn’t show good financial management when church leaders keep asking for money each year from the standpoint of “we need to pay the bills.” I don’t want to invest in an organization that can’t even balance its budget! So, what makes your church special? **What is your mission?** How you answer those questions is crucial not only to the success of your next stewardship campaign but may determine your survival as a congregation.

What makes the church different from other nonprofits in the world? One way to determine what sets you apart in your mission is to **tell your story**. There’s a reason your congregation began, and a reason why they’re still here. What is it that draws people in and keeps them coming back? As you listen to *individual stories*, you will probably also notice a *collective narrative* among the community, something that draws members to the church and to each other. Especially in smaller or older congregations, telling the story is a great way to help people articulate the mission of their church.

So, how might you share the story of our congregation?

Pr. 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 January 11th. Council members shared prayers for persons identified by Janet, Arlone's friend, the death of a neighbor to Adrian's, families of those affected by the recent fires across the country, frontline healthcare workers, & all workers who are affected by short staffing and overtime.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Ecclesiastes 5:7 and Colossians 2:18-19. The first reminds us not to dwell on the emptiness of words or dreams, but rather fear God. The second tells us not to allow ourselves to be condemned by those who act superior or self-righteous.

Visions for Ministry: The author talked about the importance of encouragement. We often think of encouragement as an expression of words, but we can find encouragement in non verbal ways, too, like gathering with others and witnessing actions being done. How can you encourage others in your daily life? 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 - Pastor submitted an application for consideration. OTOC - Vicki is connecting for us and attended their virtual meeting. April 3rd is the community fundraiser, asking for each organization to provide a basket for the auction and they are interested in jewelry. Contact Vicki with any ideas.

Finance: Budget 2022- Council prepared the 2022 budget to be presented at the annual meeting.

Housing Allowance Resolution: Brenda motioned to accept the proposed resolution, Ralph seconded. Motion carried.

Pastor reported that the Wells Fargo account for the Organization and Outreach Funds were closed. Money is being transferred to the Restricted Fund.

Property: Internet: Council has decided to pay cost difference for the upgrade to Pastor's internet connection so that the recorded service can be uploaded with greater efficiency. We may need to replace the upstairs kitchen sink disposal. Loren has almost completed laying the new tile downstairs over the new sump pump installation.

Service/Social Ministry: Thrivent Action Team grant covered materials for Pastor Laaker's grandchildren to make 9 fleece tie blankets for those who are our home bound members of Grace & St. Luke's.

Support/Stewardship: Last quarterly letter from 2021 has been sent out.

Worship: Lent begins the first Wednesday in March. If the other cluster churches want to do a collaborative online presence, we are in favor of doing that.

Unfinished Business: Annual Meeting: no meal this year. We will plan to meet following the worship service at St. Luke's on January 30.

Audit Committee: Donna and Brenda will help with this.

Grace & St. Luke's councils met to discuss the future of our churches. Our next meeting is scheduled for February 24th at 5:00pm at St. Luke's.

Nominating Committee: Eva, Greg, and Ron are all willing to serve.

New Business: Cluster Meeting (Bishop) - special election for Bishop will take place this year because Bishop Maas will not be finishing out his 6 year term. Cluster will meet on Saturday, February 5th at Augustana - at this meeting individuals will be able to submit names for candidates for consideration. We will ask at the annual meeting for 2 volunteers to attend.

Announcements: Ralph will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

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:

Mickey Andersen
Andrew Edwards
Samuel Mantzaris
Susan Miller
David Nange
Marilyn Van Ormer



Vicki Cox
June Hilmer
Carolyn Matson
Sue Mize
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.

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



To Pastor & Mary Laaker and all 9 grandchildren, thank you for the beautiful blanket you all made. It is very warm on these cold nights. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated. Thank you so much.

Want you to know you are always in my thoughts and prayers. May your year be full of peace and joy with all of you at Grace Lutheran Church.

Love, Marilyn Van Ormer



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.

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



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.

Lutheran Women of Omaha
 Tuesday, February 8, 2022 - 12:00 Noon

Join us at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, 2650 Farnam Street. Program focus will be Lutheran Service Corp with Ryan James and Sarah Anderson. Cost is \$3.00.

Free Will Offering will support Lutheran Service Corp.

Bring Your Own Sack Lunch.

Call Mardelle Gocsek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, February 6th to reserve your seat.



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**

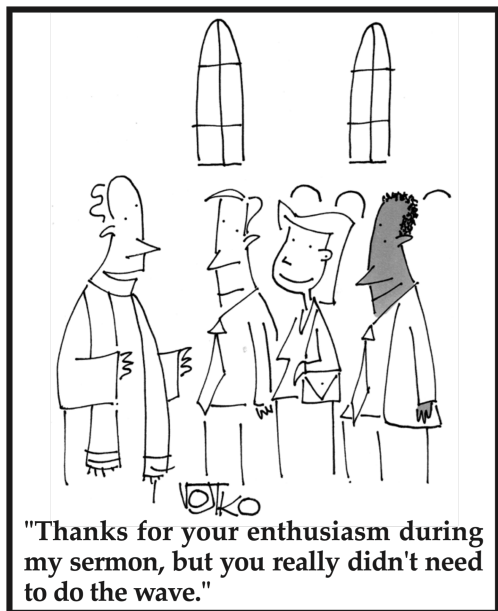
Protect the
volunteers,
yourself and
your family!



**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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Signs and Wonders

Inscription on a tombstone:

"Here lies an atheist, all dressed up and no place to go."

~ The Baltimore Sun, via Lorene Irving, Luthervill Timonium, MD

Sign seen outside Calvary Baptist Church, Dedham MA:

"God is divine. We are dibranches. Bear fruit."

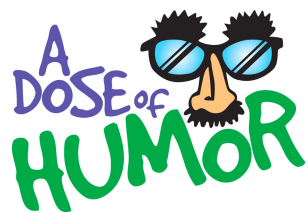
~ via Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, Dover DE

Sign seen in a nursing home:

"Remember, old folks are worth a fortune - silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, lead in their feet, and gas in their stomach."

~ via Rev. Paul Lintern, Mansfield, OH

"Old-timer: an elderly person who can remember when folks sat down at the table and counted their blessings instead of calories."



Sign outside St. Joseph the Wonder Worker Catholic Church:

"We are still open between Christmas and Easter."

~ via Bob White, Owego, NY

Gods Love



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BEGINNING
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JESUS CHRIST
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TRUE
JOIN
DOVE
REAL
PRAYER
FELLOWSHIP
BEAUTIFUL
PRAISE
BELIEVER
FOLLOW
WORSHIP
FAMILY



Found on Goggle Images.

God's kids say & do the funniest things

A Sunday school teacher began her lesson with a question: "Boys and girls, what do we know about God?"

"He's an artist!" a little boy replied.

"Really. How do you know?" the teacher asked.

"Our Father, who does art in Heaven," the boy replied.

~ via Mrs. Donna, Benson, Albuquerque, NM

Worship Update

February Sunday Worship Services will be held at Grace Lutheran Church.
Service begins at 9:30 a.m. Hope to see you here!

WORSHIP
with us