

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

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[www.facebook.com/gracelutheranoma](https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranoma)

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

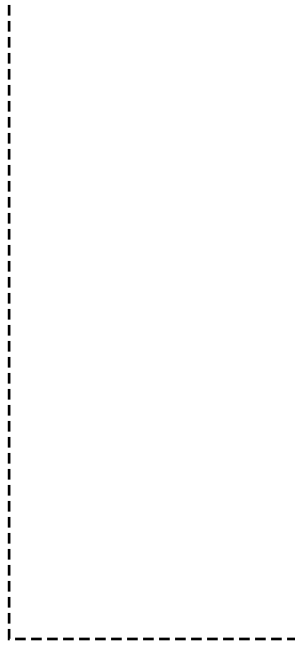
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office February 24



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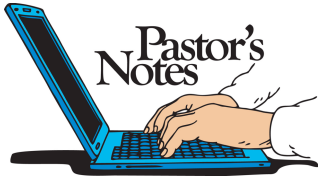
# THE GRACE MESSENGER

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](http://graceluth.com)**



I wish to thank all those who participated in our Annual Meetings. In addition, I wish to thank all those persons who submitted reports to be included in our Annual Report. Your willingness to share the efforts that support the ministry of the congregation and advance the love of Christ in this community is wonderful.

I also wish to thank those members of our Councils that concluded a term of service. Your leadership over the last several years has been a very special gift during this time of pandemic. I have appreciated your thoughtfulness and your commitment. Well done, good and faithful servants.

As we embark on a new year, I recognize that most of us were prepared for a time that has been permanently altered by the pandemic. Our memories are locked in to things that were meaningful and important as we developed connections within the faith family. I get it but I also know that for many of our younger folks the manner in which they connect is different. How might we be adaptive to new ways of connecting?

Twenty plus years ago, Ray Bakke, writing in "The Expanded Mission of City Center Churches," said, "In attempting to recover the vision of the founders of an Old First Church, it is important to begin by understanding and appreciating that church's past. History is a unique fabric of human vision brought to fruition within the context of human effort. Different factors accounted for the reason some Old First were planted..." It seems to me that thought motivates me to consider what are the factors that motivated our ancestors in the faith in this congregation. What can we learn from those factors? Where can we draw parallels to God's calling to us in this time? Are we willing to explore those parallels and set our hearts and minds on the effort to engage the current context?

*Continued.....*

I am convinced that God still has work for us to do. This ministry site is as important today as it was more than a hundred years ago when it was founded here.

I invite you to be in prayer about God's intent for this time. By prayer, I mean more than just words expressed. I mean listen and observe what God is up to in this time. Asking the question, what do you want me to see? What do you want me to do? How might we be your loving presence here?

May the Spirit of Christ lead us and guide us.

Pr. Laaker

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### Stewardship

*"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received....so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ."*

1 Peter 4:10-11 - NRSV



Generous disciples of Jesus lead expansive lives as stewards of everything and every relationship God gives us. As I look toward what stewardship might look like in 2022 and beyond, I see the church engaging in expansive, enduring work that will benefit our communities for years to come.

Expansive stewardship recognizes that stewardship happens in all kinds of ways and on all sorts of timelines. Some gifts are given for use now, and other gifts are designed for use later. Both types of gifts require thoughtful imagination.

Through Christ Jesus, we learn that God's grace relentlessly seeks to make our broken lives and communities whole. God's Holy Spirit breathes faith and new life into us. When we understand what God has and continues to do for us, what will we do in response? Stewardship is not something we have to do to be saved; it is something we get to do in response to God's wildly abundant love.

How might we respond for 2022 and beyond?

Pr. Laaker



## 2022 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Andrew Edwards	Sarah Emery
Ralph Fitle	Greg Hula	Janet Hula
Eva Martin	Brenda Spahr	Amanda Vazquez
Pastor Laaker		

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Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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The regular meeting of the council was held on February 8th. Council members shared prayer concerns for individuals connected to Council Members, a congregational member, new Afghan families resettling in Omaha and the organizations helping with that process, the situation in Ukraine, & praise for the beautiful weather today.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “Daily Texts” from Isaiah 51:7 and 1 Timothy 6:12. The first reminds us not to worry about the criticisms of others. The second tells us to be faithful and hold onto the promise of eternal life.

Special Election of Officers for 2022:

Vice President - Sarah Emery

Financial Secretary - Janet Hula

Treasurer - Ralph Fitle

Secretary - Amanda Vazquez



Visions for Ministry: The author discussed the ways pandemic has changed the way the church functions. In what ways have we explored different forms of outreach? The idea that we will go “back to normal” is misleading because the world has changed and we have to figure out how to minister to people in this new, adaptive time.

How can we further our ministry digitally, beyond what we are already doing? (digital mission field) Pastor shared these examples from our sister congregations.

1. request prayers - call, text, direct message (Facebook)
2. daily devotions - Facebook Live

Read Chapter 3 for next month.

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

Christian Education: Throwing Doors Wide Open - Pastor shared an article on outdoor Sunday school.

Evangelism/Outreach, Finance, Property and Support/ Stewardship: No new report.

Service/Social Ministry: Pantry Gathering - a rep from Catholic Charities talked with pantry-goers this week to see how many people are in their families and what items they may need that they don't typically get - sugar and cooking oil were popular mentions.

Worship: Worship Plans: Lent - Ash Wednesday, Holy Week: discussion around holding Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday in person and having virtual services for the other Wednesdays in Lent. There is conversation among sister congregations about doing a joint Good Friday service.

Unfinished Business: Our next Joint Council meeting is on Thursday, February 24th at 5pm at St. Luke's to continue conversation around the future of our churches.

New Business: None

Announcements: Brenda Spahr and Mary Laaker will be our voting members at the Nebraska Synod Assembly. Janet thanked everyone who contributed to the Annual Report, and for those willing to serve on the Council this year.

Ron will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:12pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

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**thrivent**<sup>®</sup>

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.

*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!



## Lent 2022

March 2 – Ash Wednesday – In-person service at 7 pm at St. Luke's Lutheran

Mid-Week Lenten service will be virtual services, March 9, 16, 23, 30 and April 6. You will be able to access this service on our YouTube channel and via the link on our Facebook pages. The theme for our mid-week services will be "Ministries among us." We will be inviting a number of leaders of special ministries among us to share a short message in the middle of the Holden Evening Prayer setting that will be recorded for the virtual sharing.

April 14 – Maundy Thursday – In-person service at 7 pm at Grace Lutheran

April 15 – Good Friday – Virtual service.



## Bible Study in Lent

The ELCA has provided a five-week Bible Study for Lent 2022. The theme of the study is "A Way in the Wilderness." I would like to offer a virtual gathering on Wednesdays, March 9, 16, 30 April 6, 13 at 1 pm. I will set up a Google Meet invitation for those days. I recognize that some may not be able to attend at that time. I think we can record the Meet event. If so, I will make a link to the recording on our Facebook pages.

The study booklets will be available at the back of the sanctuary in March at St. Luke's. If you would like to attend, please share your email address with me so that I can make sure you get the Google Meet invite.

Pastor Laaker

## Souper Bowl of Caring



The 32nd Annual Souper Bowl was Sunday, February 13th. Thanks to the generosity of Grace and St. Luke's \$125.00 and two jars of peanut butter was collected and will benefit the Loaves and Fishes Pantry. Thank you to all who donated!





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!

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This summer's theme is Boundless at Carol Joy Holling Camp. Campers will explore the hopeful and saving story of God and God's people. They will experience the good news of God's generous and merciful power in their lives. Just as God was loving and faithful at the time of creation, in the life of Israel, and through Jesus Christ, so God continues to be in this world now. God's love for all is truly **boundless**.

Brochures for Carol Joy Holling Camp 2022 can be found on the back table in the sanctuary. You can read additional information online at CarolJoyHolling.org and may register online.



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.

- 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 – Jayden Hegarty



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](http://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.

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

Join us at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, 2650 Farnam Street. Program focus will be Sarah Keeney with Omaha Together One Community. Cost is \$7.00.

Free Will Offering will support Omaha Together One Community.

Lunch will be provided.

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



## Personal Care Kits Lenten Ministries

This Lenten season, congregations are invited to reach out and offer comfort and care to those who need it most.

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.

Listed below are the items included in each Personal Care Kit:

- 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

Due to the wondrous generosity of donated items in the past years we have collected PLENTY of toothbrushes and combs. For 2022 lets focus on the remaining items needed for each Care Kit; Soap, Nail Clippers and Towels. Below is a breakdown of each item and numbers already collected:

- Toothbrushes - **98**
- Combs - **78**
- Bars of soap - **33**
- Towels - **10**
- Nail Clippers - **1**

Please bring your donated items each Sunday during this season of Lent. Personal Care Kits will be assembled at a date later to be determined. If you have any questions, please speak with Brenda.



## ST. MARTIN OF TOURS CHURCH

# Mardi Gras

## SHROVE TUESDAY

# Pancake Supper

## TUESDAY. MARCH 1st

*From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.*

**All you can eat for \$10**

**\$25/family**

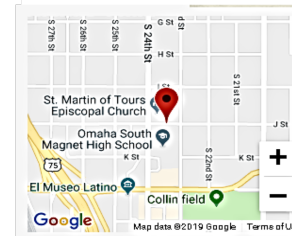
**Call 402-237-5585 for**

**Take-out**

**CASH OR CHECK ONLY**

**DONATIONS MAY BE MADE AT**

**<https://stmartinomaha.org>**



**2324 J Street, Omaha, NE 68107**

**<https://stmartinomaha.org>**



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 and paper sacks 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!

## **Baking Essentials Drive**

During the month of March, Grace and St. Luke's will be collecting requested baking/cooking needs:

**Flour, Maseca (corn masa flour),  
Sugar and Cooking Oil** to distribute to  
the Loaves and Fishes pantry participants  
in April.



Please bring your donations to church on Sundays or call the church office to schedule a time to drop off during the week.

## God's kids say & do the funniest things

The teacher was helping one of her kindergarten students put on his cowboy boots. He asked for help and she could see why. Even with her pulling and him pushing, the little boots still didn't want to go on. Finally, when the second boot was on, she had worked up a sweat. She almost cried when the little boy said, "Teacher, they're on the wrong feet."

She looked and sure enough, they were. It wasn't any easier pulling the boots off than it was putting them on. She managed to keep her cool as together they worked to get the boots back on, this time on the right feet.

He then announced, "These aren't my boots."

She bit her tongue rather than get right in his face and scream, "Why didn't you say so?" like she wanted to. And once again, she struggled to help him pull the ill-fitting boots off his little feet.

No sooner than they got the boots off, he said, "They're my brother's boots. My Mom made me wear 'em."

Now she didn't know if she should laugh or cry, but she mustered up the grace and courage she had left to wrestle the boots on his feet again.

Helping him into his coat, she asked, "Now, where are your mittens?"

He said, "I stuffed 'em in the toes of my boots."

*~ via Joygerm Joan White, Syracuse, NY  
reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com*

**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.**



## OTOC's Celebrating Community 2022

Sunday, April 3, 2022 4:00 - 7:30 pm  
Omaha Design Center, 15th & Cuming

We will be following Covid safety practices as this event and everyone attending must wear a mask except when eating.

Silent Auction Registration and Event Ticket Sales Open March 1  
Go to <http://bidpal.net/otocaucaution2022>

If you participated in the OTOC Virtual Auction in 2021 you may already be registered and may not need to register again. You will need your password to log in or you can reset it. **You can purchase tickets for yourself and guests. You can also purchase tickets to be donated to someone that OTOC selects. You will have to enter your credit card number to purchase tickets.** Please feel free to share this link with family or friends who may want to attend the event or bid on the silent auction.

Please contact Carol Beaty 402-332-8215 if you have trouble registering, purchasing tickets or have an auction item to donate.

Bidding on auction items will open on Sunday, March 26th and close at 6:30 on April 3rd. the night of the event. We are accepting items for the Silent Auction until March 16.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Vicki Cox at 402-333-5980.



### Worship Update

March 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 there!

Set Your Clocks Ahead One Hour

Daylight Savings  
Begins at 2:00 a.m. on  
Sunday, March 13th





## THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil and Jeff Keane



from JoyfulNoiseletter.com © Bil & Jeff Keane Reprinted with permission

Tourists visited an old, historic church in Alexandria, VA. The tour guide said that George Washington had attended service in the church, and pointed to his pew.

A reverent silence fell on the tourists. The guide then mentioned that church services in Washington's days were very lengthy, often lasting three hours or more.

The reverent silence was shattered when a tourist in the rear loudly proclaimed, "So George Washington slept here, too!"

~ via George Goldtrap, Ormond-by-the-Sea, FL

Jokes reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com

Smiley Anders, columnist for the Baton Rouge (LA) Advocate, passed along this bizarre Lenten story:

A priest was making his way down a dark alley to his parked car when a man thrust a revolver in his ribs and demanded, "Hand me your wallet."

When the priest reached into his inside coat pocket for his wallet, the robber saw his clerical collar and exclaimed, "Are you a priest?"

"Yes, I am," the priest replied.

"Oh, I'm a Catholic, too, and I don't rob priests," the robber said.

Greatly relieved, the priest withdrew a cigar from his inside pocket and offered it to the penitent thief.

"Oh, no! I can't take that," the thief exclaimed. "I've given up smoking for Lent."

## Lent



Cross	Rejection	Arrest	Denial
Crucifixion	Betrayal	Garden	Example
Washing Feet	Last Supper	Disciples	Peter
Good Friday	Holy Thursday	Palm Sunday	Jerusalem
Holy Week	Ash Wednesday	Ashes	desert
Jesus	forgiveness	penance	prayer
almsgiving	fasting	forty days	

Found on Goggle Images.

