

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

Email: [graceluth@graceluth.com](mailto:graceluth@graceluth.com)  
Web Site: [www.graceluth.com](http://www.graceluth.com)  
Like us on Facebook at:  
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MAY SUNDAY EVENTS  
9:30 a.m. Worship Service  
at St. Luke's Lutheran, 2315 I Street

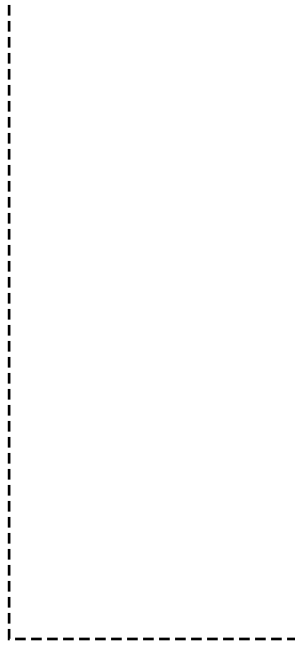
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary - Brenda Spahr  
Organist - Colleen Jeffrey  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office April 27

CHRIST  
IS RISEN  
INDEED  
*Alleluia*

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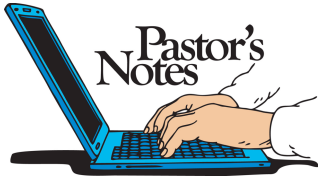
# THE GRACE MESSENGER

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)**



A couple years ago, your Council Leadership read a book by Dwight Zscheile. He recently wrote an article titled, "Will the ELCA be Gone in 30 Years?" He starts the article with this:

According to projections from the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation, the whole denomination will have fewer than 67,000 members in 2050, with fewer than 16,000 in worship on an average Sunday by 2041.

A bit shocking, wouldn't you say? He goes on to say that in some ways, this is old news. Mainline decline has been a reality for over a half century, and the trends are well established. The ELCA had over five million members when it was launched in 1988. Today, it has fewer than three and a half million. All we have to do is look at our own numbers. They have declined significantly since 1988.

All of the energy spent trying to turn this decline around has little to show for it. He says, that is because the cultural shifts underpinning this decline are largely beyond our control. He doesn't lay fault on leaders. Rather, he says, something deeper is at stake.

He names three causes. 1) We live in a culture that makes it hard for people to imagine and be led by God. He describes this in part to the fact that in the modern West God isn't necessary to live a good life. We're all supposed to discover our own meaning, purpose, identity, and community. Faith might help, but it is assumed to be optional, and there are endless options before us.

2) We aren't clear about what's distinctive about being Christian. He says, If the point of church is being a social, cultural, or community service organization, people have a lot of other ways of meeting those needs that are far more accessible. What is our identity, our core story and how does the church's practices make a distinct difference in people's lives?

3) For these reasons, church isn't helping many people make meaning of their lives. He says, A recent study from the Pew Research Center shows that spirituality and faith fall fourth in the list of sources of meaning for Americans, after family (69%), career (34%), and money (23%). People are turning elsewhere to find meaning.

His suggestions for what we can do about this include: 1) Go back to basics. We need to rediscover and reclaim the simple practices that Christians have always done – prayer, scripture study, service, reconciliation, Sabbath, hospitality, etc. – and make these the center of congregational life. 2) Shift from performative to participatory spirituality. People need to be equipped to practice simple, accessible spiritual habits and disciplines that can be adopted by everyone. 3) Listen. The church needs to learn how to listen to what keeps people up at night and help them discover how the Gospel of Jesus makes meaning out of their experience, particularly their suffering. 4) Translate. Our language and forms need to be in the vernacular. 5) Experiment. All these things involve innovation, which is simply the adoption of new practices in a community. We need to try a lot of things, learn from failure, and create an environment in which we can take risks together for the sake of the Gospel. 6) Share. We need to take this journey together, not in isolation. We need to figure out how to learn and discern together.

Lastly, he says, It is better to get clear on what God's promises in Christ are for us and for our neighbors and find simple ways to make those promises come alive for ordinary people in ways they can understand and embody.

Scary, maybe? It sounds like an adventure that will lead to many wonderful surprises.

Pastor Laaker



*Continued.....*



## 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 April 12th. Council members shared prayer concerns for family members, people of Ukraine, people affected by the fires in western Nebraska, and a family whose son died suddenly.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “Daily Texts” from Isaiah 48:20 and Colossians 1:13. The first invites us to proclaim the joy that Jacob had been redeemed. The second reminds us that God has rescued us from the power of darkness and welcomes us into God’s kingdom.

Visions for Ministry: The author talked about the importance of prayer and how the pandemic has affected the prayer life of many. It allowed more time for many to engage in prayer, and also provided new opportunities using technology for engaging with others in prayer.  
Read Chapter 5 for next month.

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

Christian Education: Bible Study during Lent finishes up this week, and confirmation will come to an end soon.

Evangelism/Outreach: Baking Essentials Collection for Pantry: Thrivent Action Grant and St. Luke’s monetary donation, along with donations from Grace and St. Luke’s members, provided 56 bags with sugar, flour, oil and about 35 corn flour for the pantry.

Finance: None

Property: Light is out on the pole that shines on our property from the SE.

Service/Social Ministry: New NA group will begin in May.

Support/Stewardship: Quarterly Statements went out.

Worship: Holy Week -

Maundy Thursday service at 6:30 pm at Grace

Joint Good Friday service at Trinity at 6:30 pm

One Hope Church service at 7:00 pm at St. Luke’s

Easter 6:30 am and 9:00 am at St. Luke’s

One Hope Church - Easter Egg Hunt at 3:00 pm on lawn at St. Luke’s and 4:00 pm service



Unfinished Business: Our next Joint Council meeting is on Monday, April 25th at 5pm at Grace to continue conversation around the future of our churches.

New Business: None

Announcements: Amanda will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 7:58pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

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### Personal Care Kits Ministries



Due to the your wonderful generosity all items have been collected to fulfill 50 kits! The Personal Care Kits will be assembled here at Grace following worship service on Sunday, May 15th. All are welcome to join in the festivities that surround assembling the Personal Care Kits that will be mailed to Lutheran World Relief.

*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:**

Vicki Cox  
June Hilmer  
Carolyn Matson  
Sue Mize  
Pam Reents  
Urbano Vasquez



Andrew Edwards  
Samuel Mantzaris  
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.

*Let's encourage each other as we see God's hand in answering our prayers.*

**Pray for our Shut-in and Nursing Home resident:**

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 address. Blessings!



## Stewardship

Rolf Jacobson wrote a piece "Beyond the tithe." He begins by saying that God cares at least as much about the money you don't give to charity as God does about the money you do give.

Friends, because we belong to God, everything about us belongs to God — our bodies, our families, our time, our relationships, and our possessions. In light of that, the question we ought to be asking is: How do people who belong to God regard all they are and all they have?

More specifically, we should be asking, what is God up to in our spending and saving? "Where is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the dollars that pass virtually through the chip reader when you buy groceries, clothes, gas, and so on? What is God up to far across the ocean when you buy a piece of clothing manufactured in China?

We could be wondering with people, "What is God up to in my investing? Where is God stirring when I put my money in the stock market?" "What is God up to when I'm tipping my hair stylist, or the single-mother waitress who hustles tables all day, or the Uber driver who isn't supposed to accept tips?"

God doesn't only care about the widow's mite, the tiny coins given to the Temple treasury by an impoverished widow (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4). Your entire family budget says something about your faith in Christ. Your entire stock portfolio may be something through which God is up to good work in the world.

Pr. Laaker

Pastor Damon & Grace Lutheran Endowment and Church,

Thank you for your ongoing financial donations and support of Table Grace Ministries. We value your generosity and commitment very much! We couldn't continue to serve the community without supporters like you!

**TABLE GRACE**  
CAFE  
Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

Blessings and Much Gratitude!  
Simone, Matt and Table Grace





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!

Lutheran Women of Omaha  
Tuesday, May 10, 2022 - 12:00 Noon

Join us at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 7308 S. 42nd St.  
South of Harrison on 42nd.



Cost: \$3.00 Bring your own lunch. Drinks & dessert will be provided.

Guest speaker will be Cathy from Immanuel Pathways (PACE)  
Free Will Offering will support Salvation Army.

Call Mardelle Gocsek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, May 8th 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.

- 7 – Christi Edwards
- James Harrahill
- 8 – Ellison Simon
- 10 – Juan Vazquez
- 16 – Marissa Halfhill
- 21 – Jessica Armstrong
- 22 – Parsila Dike
- 25 – Arlone Farber
- 26 – Estir Lewa
- 27 – Brenda Anzalone
- Donna Adrian
- 31 – David Wallace

### City of Omaha Job Fair & Career Expo



May 2 & 3 - High School Students & Their Families  
May 4 - General Public  
4:00 - 7:00 pm  
Omaha Public Safety Training Center  
11616 Rainwood Road, Omaha, NE 68142

Come learn about full and part-time job opportunities, explore career paths, interact with current City employees. There will be table giveaways and raffle prizes!

Participating Departments include: Human Resources, Human Rights & Relations, Fire, Police, Parks-Recreation-Public Property, Mayor's Office, Public Works; Sewer, Streets, Construction, Waste Water Treatment and Fleet. Convention and Visitor's Bureau will be participating on May 4th only.

You will be able to interview on-site for Lifeguard, Automotive Equipment Operator, and Camp Counselor positions.

Check out additional current job openings at [www.cityofomaha.org](http://www.cityofomaha.org).



## DIRIAN'S STORY

"It's difficult," Dirian said of growing up in Honduras.

When Dirian was just five years old, her mother made the difficult decision to leave Honduras to seek better opportunities and a brighter future for Dirian and her then three-year-old brother.

In December of 2013, at just 13-years-old Dirian and her then 11-year-old brother, made the treacherous journey to the United States. Together, they traveled through Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico on foot, in cars, and even swimming in the cold Rio Grande until finally making it to the United States in January 2014.

"The journey was difficult, we almost died," Dirian said. "We would get hungry along the way but all there was to eat was a rolled-up tortilla with some chicken."

At the border, Border Patrol took Dirian and her brother to "las hieleras," rigid, cramped holding cells in Customs and Border Protection facilities.

After days at "las hieleras," Dirian and her brother were then placed in ORR custody before being released to their mother. "It was a beautiful experience, we were all crying," Dirian said.

Once safely settled in the United States, Dirian, her brother, and her mother were connected with an immigration attorney.



With the help of Immigrant Legal Center, Dirian was able to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status and have her removal proceedings terminated. In 2016 Dirian was able to adjust her status and get her Legal Permanent Resident Card and in 2021 Dirian became a U.S. Citizen.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity not many people have," Dirian said. "I can now create a better future for myself."

### In 2021 Immigrant Legal Center

|   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 794 Consultations Provided  | 19 Full-time Attorneys           |
| 3,169 Cases Worked  | 1,681 Clients Served             |
| 94% Case Success Rate   | 5 DOJ Accredited Representatives |
| 62 Client Countries of Origin   | 10 Offices Statewide             |
| Over 5,000 Calls to NILAH (Nebraska Immigration Legal Assistance Hotline) 1-855-307-6730. |                                  |



## Free Trash Dump! Columbus Place and Quarters Neighborhood Associations Clean Up



**May 21, 2022**  
**9:00am – 2:00pm Only**  
**No early Drop Offs!**

**St. Vincent De Paul Parking Lot**  
**2101 Leavenworth St.**

**Metal:** We are accepting iron, steel, brass, aluminum and car parts.

**Tires:** We are accepting tires and batteries.

We are accepting bulky materials.

Please consider donating your usable items to St. Vincent DePaul.

May is neighborhood clean up month. If you are interested in finding your neighborhood clean up information, visit [wasteline.org](http://wasteline.org) - Spring cleanup 2022.



## Baking Essentials Drive

Our "Essential Baking Items" drive during March was a success! Thanks to our generous members and an Action Team donation from Thrivent, we were able to collect flour, sugar, cooking oil and Meseca

(corn flour) for the Loaves and Fishes pantry recipients. Sixty-five bags were prepared by willing helpers and were distributed on Monday, April 11th. Thanks to everyone who donated their time and baking items for this successful drive.

Remember to Vote on  
Tuesday, May 10th.





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. Thanks to your generosity the Pantry has a very huge stock of bags and egg cartons! Currently there is no need for these items. Please continue to keep the Pantry and all the work that is done in your prayers.



Do you know of a family or individual in need of food assistance? Please share the Pantry information with them.



**face masks**  
are encouraged

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.**



### Usable Glasses Give New Life

Refractive errors can be easily corrected with eyeglasses, yet millions living in low and middle income countries lack access to basic eye care services. Lions Club have recognized the urgent need for corrective lenses and collect usable glasses in their communities to support the Lions Recycle For Sight Program.

If you have a set or two of previous wearable glasses no longer in need, please bring them to the church office and help individuals to see their world a little more clearly. A box is located in the back of the sanctuary to place them.

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Have You Included  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Endowment Fund  
in Your Will?



A current, Remember the Church in Your Will, brochures are currently available upon request. Please pick up a free copy during your next worship time and consider Grace Lutheran a place for remembrance.



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.

### "Mother"

*Who showed me a rainbow high in the sky?  
Who rocked me and sang a sweet lullabye?  
Who folded my hands and taught me to pray?  
Who hunted violets with me on a warm Spring day?  
Who squeezed my hand when I felt pain?  
Who picked me up so I could try again?  
Who loved me on this earth as could no other  
But the gift God gave me I called "Mother."*



*by Dottie M. Hula  
Mother's Day, 1993*

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### You Know You're a Mom When....

You count the sprinkles on each child's cupcake to make sure they are equal.

You hide in the bathroom to be alone.

You mastered the art of placing large quantities of pancakes and eggs on a plate without anything touching.

You hope ketchup is a vegetable because it is the only one your child eats.

You find yourself cutting your husband's sandwiches into unusual shapes.

You fast-forward through the scene when the hunter shoots Bambi's mother.

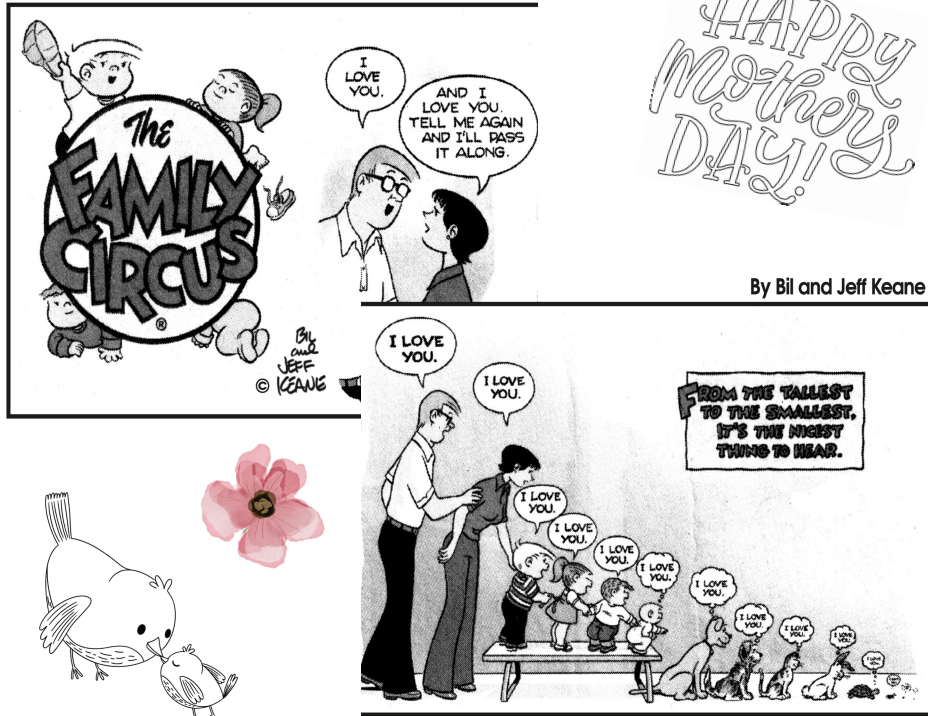
You read that the average five-year-old asks 437 questions a day and feel proud that your child is above average.

You say at least once a day, "I am not cut out for this job", but you know you would not trade it for anything in the world.

*shared by skywriting.net*



# THE FAMILY CIRCUS



By Bil and Jeff Keane

## I See Children as Kites

I see children as kites. You spend a lifetime trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you're both breathless... they crash... you add a longer tail... they hit the rooftop... you pluck them out of the spout. You patch and comfort, adjust and teach. You watch them lifted by the wind and assure them that someday they'll fly.

Finally, they are airborne, but they need more string and you keep letting it out. With each twist of the ball of twine, there is a sadness that goes with the joy because the kite becomes more distant, and somehow you know that it won't be long before that beautiful creature will snap the lifeline that bound you together and soar as it was meant to soar... free and alone.

Only then do you know that you did your job.

~ Erma Bombeck

Jokes reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com

HAPPY  
Mother's  
DAY!

## Mother's Day Word Search



APPRECIATION  
BEAUTIFUL  
BREAKFAST  
CANDY  
CHARMING  
COMFORT  
DEVOTED  
FLOWERS  
FORGIVING  
GIFTS

GUIDANCE  
HUGS  
JEWELRY  
JOY  
KISSES  
LAUGHTER  
LOVE  
MATERNAL  
MOM  
MOTHER

NURTURE  
PERFUME  
PROTECTIVE  
SHARE  
TELEPHONE  
TENDER  
THE BEST  
WARM  
WISE

## Signs and Wonders

Sign outside Emmanuel Church of Christ in Abbottstown, PA:  
"God recycles. You were made from dust."

~ via Lorene Irving, Lutherville Timonium, MD