

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

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

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

Delivered to the Post Office November 28



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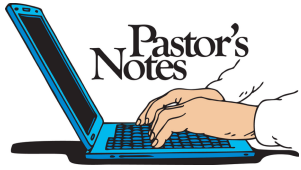
THE GRACE MESSENGER

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



FIVE GIFTS OF DISCIPLESHIP ... *during* Advent and Christmas

Advent and Christmas are ideal seasons of the church year to emphasize LIVING OUR BAPTISM and to discover the five gifts of discipleship. Gifts! Gifts! Gifts! Gift-giving and gift-receiving dominant today's Advent and Christmas seasons. Millions of dollars are spent in advertising to convince us to purchase the perfect gift to ensure perfect holidays and happiness.

The church has an opportunity (and challenge) to shift attention to the real gift of Christmas—Emmanuel, God with us. Two possible themes to celebrate the gifts of discipleship during Advent and Christmas:

- Emmanuel—God's Gift to Us
- Mary's Song—God's Gift to the World



Theme 1: Emmanuel—God's Gift to Us

God came and dwelt among us in Jesus. He is the gift which surpasses the beautifully wrapped gifts placed under the Christmas tree. He is the gift of God born as an infant in a manger. But Jesus is also the one who grew to be an adult, who healed, taught, performed miracles, and ultimately sacrificed his life on a cross, only to live again. God's gift made known in Christ is truly the "reason for the season."

The GIFT of Community—to live among God's faithful people.

Reach out to church members who are lonely and grieving.

The GIFT of God's Word—hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper.

Hear about Emmanuel through song, drama, film, preaching, and acts of generosity.

The GIFT of Good News—proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed.

Go out into the community to share the good news of God. Be intentional.

Continued.....

The GIFT of Service—serve all people, following the example of Jesus.

Reach out and respond to those in need in your local community.

The GIFT of Justice and Peace—strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Be open to your voice becoming an advocate for justice and peace.

Theme 2: Mary's Song—God's Gift to the World

This Advent and Christmas, you are invited to prayerfully ponder one story—the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus—and how her song inspires faithful discipleship.

There once was a young woman named Mary who found favor with God. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to deliver a message to this favored one:

"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you...Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:28, 30-33 NRSV)

Her cousin Elizabeth confirmed the truth, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb... And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." (Luke 1:42, 45 NRSV) Talk about a world turned upside down!

Living our Baptism...Five Gifts of Discipleship during Advent and Christmas written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade. May be reproduced for local, non-sale use provided the copyright notice is included.

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God bless!
Pastor Laaker



2022 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Andrew Edwards	Sarah Emery
Ralph Fitle	Greg Hula	Janet Hula
Eva Martin	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 November 8, 2022. Council members shared prayer concerns for a member who was recently diagnosed with cancer, the family of Doris Solem, people facing another potential hurricane, those affected by wars and violence abroad, and fair elections.

Devotions: Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “Daily Texts” from Jeremiah 1:7 and Acts 18:9-10. The first tells us that one is not too young to share the word of God. The second reminds us that we should not be afraid to speak about our faith because God is with us.

Visions for Ministry: Article on Sacred Hospitality explored what it means to be a sanctuary church. The ELCA nationwide voted to become a sanctuary denomination, and churches have applied that idea in different ways based on their facilities, resources, and community needs. The article encourages people to listen to their immigrant neighbors to learn about their experiences, and the often impossible choices with which they are faced, to better understand the complex issue. If we listen, we will gain compassion for our immigrant neighbors and understand the need to improve our immigration system to better serve those who are caught up in the injustices of it.

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

Christian Education

Advent Calendars and Study booklet - will be available later this month.

Evangelism/Outreach: OTOC 2023 - we will provide the same level of support as last year.

Nange funeral expenses covered by endowment, plot donation - Mabaan community has expressed their sincere gratitude for our support in the midst of David's passing.

Pastor Jimenez from Prince of Peace - asked about potential office space.

Pastor is working on figuring out the best space for him.

Continued...

Finance: Immanuel Vision deadline was missed.

Thrivent Action Team Grants to support staff at Liberty and Spring Lake.
Endowment Report -Motion to ratify the distributions passed.

Property: Tile that was damaged by an old refrigerator can now be replaced. Two New Refrigerators have been purchased for the Loaves and Fishes Pantry by the Endowment Fund.

Service/Social Ministry: Lutheran Service Corps is disconnecting from Lutheran Volunteer Corps to focus on recruiting local people for their program. We decided we will not participate in the placement program this year.

Support/Stewardship: Make It Simple - Info and commitment card distributed soon.

Worship: We will recognize Colleen Jeffrey for her work among us on Sunday, November 13.

Lynda Laird will be filling in for us for the rest of the year.

Unfinished Business: Joint Council Meeting Wednesday, November 16th at 5:00pm at Grace.

New Business: None.

Announcements: Thanksgiving Eve Service at St. Matthews at 6:30pm
Ron will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment: The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:43pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary



Christmas Eve Service

4:30 pm

St. Luke's Lutheran Church

2315 "I" Street

All are invited and welcomed!
Sing 'Silent Night' by candlelight



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
Pam Reents
Urbano Vasquez
The family of Naayian (Moses) Titus Nyiwe



Andrew Edwards
Samuel Mantzaris
Sue Mize
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 Scott Johnson, Nebraska Synod
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Charles Tuw is the elder for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

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

Pray for our Shut-ins and Nursing Home residents:

Vicki Cox - Home
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills
Marilyn Van Ormer - Home



All of our homebound enjoy receiving mail, if you would like to brighten their day, please call the church office for any addresses you need. Blessings!



Please turn in your expected commitment card for giving in 2023.

Blessings
Pr. Laaker

CLEAN YOUR SPACE CLEAR YOUR MIND

A lot of learning takes place in the classroom, but things can also get pretty messy. Sometimes it feels like every surface quickly becomes downright gross - especially during cold and flu season! Whether dealing with glue, glitter, or germ-y hands, the right classroom cleaning supplies are needed to get through the school year.



During December we will be collecting Disinfecting Wipes and Kleenex tissues to be distributed to our elementary schools Liberty and Spring Lake at the beginning of second semester in January.

Our goal is 100 containers of disinfecting wipes and 100 boxes of Kleenex!

If you have any questions, please speak with Cindy Fleming or Amanda Vazquez.





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 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, and Eva, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly Grace Messenger!
- ✝ 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!

I also wanted to thank you and all the people at Grace and St. Luke's for the beautiful certificate, cards, kind words and wonderful reception given for me! The people of Grace and St. Luke's have treated me like family. It's hard to say goodbye. I wish the best for you and the all the people of these two congregations! Thanks again!



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 – Nowa Keita
3 – Barb Nelson
15 – Izabella Perales
18 – Marilyn Van Ormer
22 – Sherif Lado
24 – Lola Harsin



December Sunday Worship services
 held here at Grace Lutheran
 9:30 am
 All are welcome!

This year December 25th is on a Sunday!

Lutheran Women of Omaha
 Tuesday, December 13, 2022
 12:00 Noon



Join us at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, 61st and Western

Cost: \$7.00

Program will be "A Ring of Flutes" (they play for the love of it). Free Will Offering will support Project Hope Monetary.

Call Mardelle Gocsek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, December 11th to reserve your seat.

KETV Family Festival

Presented by Bank of America

Sunday, December 4th 11am to 4pm



The KETV Family Festival is back-in-person this year! Enjoy a festive day full of family-friendly activities at your favorite Downtown Omaha attractions! See below for information about which Downtown venues are participating and what activities they are offering!

PLUS! Ollie the Trolley will be providing FREE transportation between all the venues!

Omaha Children's Museum: Holiday activities; Santa meet and greet!

Kaneko: Creative stations and Storytelling in collaboration with OPL!

Omaha Public Library (at Kaneko): Storytime with Omaha Public Library staff, Crafts and coloring, Book giveaway (to each child 12 and under while supplies last), and Appearance and photo opportunities with Llama Llama and OPL's mascot, Scamper.

Omaha Police Mounted Patrol Barn: Amazing Arthur Entertainment, Horse demonstrations every hour, and Santa!



The Durham Museum: View museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions such as Dressing the Abbey and Holiday Cultural Trees, Holiday activities with the Christmas at the Union Station celebration, See the region's largest indoor Christmas display, and Visit Santa and his elves!

Downtown YMCA: Mr. and Mrs. Santa Clause, Craft make-and-take activities, Mascots from local schools, Offering a no-joiner fee for anyone that attends the event!



Community Relay is a free, online directory to help you find services and support in your local community.



Starting with your zip code, you can search for local programs and services for things like food, housing, job placement, transportation, legal services and more. Community Relay is searchable in over 100 different languages and more than 155,000 organizations participate nationwide! Community Relay is a free resource presented by the Nebraska Health Network. Please visit - communityrelay.com and see if you and someone you know can benefit from this helpful website!



We are grateful to have had the opportunity to share the boundless love of God with 1,346 campers at Carol Joy Holling and Sullivan Hills Camps this past summer. We all know how faith comes alive when we step outside of our day-to-day routines and explore faith conversations with our peers at camp. Check out some of the upcoming opportunities for the youth of your congregation to get back to camp this winter:

January 21-22, 2023 - High School Retreat. We are trying something new this year, and moving the Retreat out of winter break and into January.

To learn more about this retreat and to register, visit: CJHCenter.org/upcoming-retreats.

Early Bird registration is now open for summer camp 2023. Campers who sign up before January 31, will receive \$50 off a full-week session and a CJH Camp beanie!



At Christmastime, an irate Massachusetts motorist blew all four of his car's tires while driving over a stretch of road notorious for its potholes. After he fixed his tires, he bought several small Christmas trees with red ribbons tied to their tops, and planted the trees in the potholes. The county officials took the hint, and a few days later, removed the Christmas trees and filled the potholes.

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

Joke reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com



Dear friends of Grace Lutheran Church,

My name is Ashley, and I'm the Associate Director of [MICA House](#). Over the last couple of years, MICA House has continued to provide shelter and support to families and women experiencing homelessness in our community. Although we had to reduce the number of volunteers and supplemental programming, we never stopped serving through our mission.

We are in need of volunteers for our [BUDDY Program](#) – a play program that allows kids to be kids while their parents attend classes in the evenings. BUDDY Program is hosted on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday night from 6-8 PM. Individuals interested in supporting the youngest clients at MICA House can apply via this form: <https://bit.ly/3C8HMPu>

We are also in need of food and supplies like pasta, canned vegetables and fruit, and diapers (size 5-6). We have online wish lists through Amazon and Target that can ship directly to us. Groups or individuals are also welcome to host a collection drive for items, and we would be happy to talk more with anyone who is interested in hosting a drive.

Visit our website at: themicahhouse.org to learn more about the volunteer opportunities at MICA House. If you need or want any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out. I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

Ashley Flater, Associate Director/Interim Executive Director MICA House
1415 Ave J, Council Bluffs, IA 51501 ~ phone: 712-323-4416 x. 2105
aflater@themicahhouse.org

2023 Winter Retreat

January 14, 2023

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Grand Island



Join us for a day of fellowship, fun, and lunch.

Guest speaker is Jennifer Rodewald, she is a Christian author of fiction who is passionate about the Word of God and the power of story. There will be updates from Saved to Serve Opportunities, Conference Spring Gatherings, and of course, some fun surprises for all.

Visit: womenoftheelca.org for additional information.



1611 1/2 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

2022 has been a year of successes and challenges. Costs are on the rise, upward trend in cafe patronage to be the "in need" who volunteer for their meal. Income is down. We invite you to give generously to assist in sustaining the mission of Table Grace Ministries. We are seeking monthly donors who would give \$100 - \$5000 per month or one time donations. All donations are welcome. We thank you for your support, prayers, and partnership.

Successes

7000 Cafe meals served

3000 Truck meals served

32 - 10 day applicants

3 - 10 day graduates

Challenges

Fuel prices 44% increase

Food prices 9.1% increase

In need meals 20% increase

Income/donations 10% decrease

Ways you can donate: [Paypal nhbs.cc/paypal](https://www.paypal.com/nhbs) * Text the word "NOURISHING" to 44-321 * Come to Table Grace for a meal and give * Attend a Food Truck lunch and give * Send a check to Table Grace (address above) * Book an Event [nhbs.cc/book](https://www.nhbs.cc/book).

"988" The Nation's New Mental Health Hotline

"988" has been activated as the new three-digit mental health program hotline. In 2020 the Federal Communication Commission designated "988" as the new help number and Congress funded it. Anyone who needs help with their mental health, particularly people in crisis or those struggling with mental health issues, should call this number. Operators speak both English and Spanish and have access to interpreters with over 150 languages.



When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

The current Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis, even after 988 is launched nationally.

Website: suicidepreventionlifeline.org and 988lifeline.org

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.



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.

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 clean plastic grocery bags and paper grocery bags!** 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

**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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PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS



"Miss Kirsh, why is it so hard to gather a flock in a nation of sheep?"

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
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Special Nativity Scene

A Nativity scene was erected in a churchyard. During the night folks came across a unique, and real life, special Nativity scene.

An abandoned puppy was looking for a comfortable and protected place to sleep. So, he chose baby Jesus as his comforter and protector. No one had the heart to send him away, so he slept peacefully in the lap of the baby Jesus all night long. It looks like the puppy is smarter than some people are.



We should all have the good sense of this puppy and cuddle-up to Jesus from time to time.

Lets always remember that Jesus is there for us, during the good times or bad. Night or day, seek Jesus out, like this smart "Shepherd" puppy did.

Merry Christmas

unknown author
shared by skywriting.net



O HOLY NIGHT

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

ANGEL
ANIMALS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
DONKEY
FRANKINCENSE

GIFTS
GOLD
JESUS
JOSEPH
MANGER
MARY

MYRRH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERD
STAR
WISE MEN



Signs and Wonders

Sign outside Calvary Baptist Church, Selma, NC:

"Christmas without Jesus is just a 'hollow' day."

~ Lorene Irving, Lutherville Timonium, MD
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