

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

JULY SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 am. Worship Service

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

Delivered to the Post Office June 28



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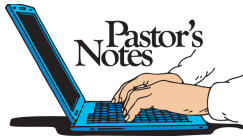
THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2023



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



Most of you know that I have been an ardent supporter of efforts to address the food needs of people locally and around the world. I helped start and supported the Omaha CROP Walk for years. I served on the Board of Directors for Project Hope. I was the Director of Lutheran Metro Ministry that oversaw the Lutheran Pantry efforts here in the city of Omaha. I encouraged Grace's Council to take the risk and join in the adventure of providing a weekly food pantry. Mary and I support the ELCA World Hunger Appeal each month.

I have also been active in communicating with our elected Congressional people seeking their willingness to act on behalf of those with food needs. Each year Congress is presented with the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill provides the guidelines for support through the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as well as other domestic nutrition programs and funding for critical international food assistance programs.

Nebraska's food insecurity rate is slightly higher than the national average of 10.4%. The official poverty rate in Nebraska averages 8.4%.

Each year, Bread for the World organizes churches, community organizations, and people of faith from across the country to write letter and emails to their members of Congress who have the power to impact the policies and programs that can end hunger. I have been a participant in this effort for years.

Therefore, I would like to ask each of you to write or call your Congressional members and ask them to support the Farm Bill. There will be information on the table as you enter the worship space. Or, if you prefer, you can enter this internet address: <https://www.bread.org/offering-letters/#Resources> and there you can get a copy of the material that will be on the table and/or access to your Congressional person's email.

Continued.....

Bread for the World supports strengthening SNAP in Nebraska. Bread for the World supports farm policies that promote a more equitable food system in Nebraska. Bread for the World is committed to eradicating food insecurity by building a more sustainable food system in Nebraska.

Let's do our part in helping advocate support for the Farm Bill in Congress.

Pastor Laaker



2023 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Sarah Emery	Arlone Farber
Ralph Fitle	Greg Hula	Eva Martin
Brenda Spahr	Pastor Laaker	

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

Notes of the Regular Council Meeting - June 13, 2023

Gathering of Prayers We expressed prayers of praise for Janet's recent checkup that went very well. We also pray for an end to the gun violence and mass shootings.

Devotions Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the "Daily Texts" from Numbers 14:17 and Luke 1:49. Both remind us that God keeps promises, the first by delivering the chosen people out of Egypt and the second by fulfilling the birth of Christ through Mary.

Visions for Ministry Do I Stay Christian? by Brian McLaren
Council discussed Chapters 9 & 10 which listed several *bias* explanations that people in general are known to follow, one example involved climate change and how it could be linked to the end of existence, some individuals are looking toward the end and are not concerned with the present. Another discussion point involved the violence linked to January 6, 2021 where it was noted that and Jesus' name was invoked in support of the actions. How do we climb out of this reality of daily violence and are we willing to be different?

Continued...

A new term council became aware of was “shrinkling” meaning congregations nationwide are in a state of decline. Council looks forward to reading and discussing chapters 11 and 12 for next month’s meeting.

Minutes The minutes of the regular May 2023 meeting of the council were accepted as printed.

Financial Secretary’s Report The report of the Financial Secretary, Janet Hula, was presented and accepted by motion.

Treasurer’s Report The report of the Treasurer, Ralph Fitle, was presented and accepted by motion.

Mission Share The monthly Mission Share contribution and the San Andres contribution were both made in May – ending with 100% of our pledge for both.

Committee Reports

Christian Education Barnabas inquired of Pastor regarding the possibility of trying Sunday School classes on Saturday maybe once or twice a month. Pastor shared the Synod Emphasis on a year-long focus to “Go and...” the first month (June) will focus on Prayer. Each month will have a new focus through May of 2024.

Evangelism/Outreach Pastor continues guiding Barnabas Dyedi as he continues to prepare for the August Nebraska Synod Candidacy meeting.

Finance The Witt Fund CD has been reinvested in the 4-year CD at 4.25%.

Property Mike Guericke has plans to rebuild the Little Library that is located near the entrance to the parking lot.

Service/Social Ministry The pantry had a minor hiccup with one of the alley neighbors during pantry distribution on Monday, June 12th, we continue to pray for a more peaceful connection.

Pastor shared *Offering of Letters* from Bread for the World in hopes of an increase of people mailing letters to our elected officials asking them to approve the Farm Bill and bring support to those facing food insecurities.

Continued.....

Support/Stewardship Church-Budget sent a bill with a 25% reduction for the offering envelopes that arrived three months into 2023. Along with the bill was an apology, appreciation, an explanation and a plan to improve deliveries this year. Council decided to stay with Church-Budget envelopes for 2024.

Worship Pastor and Barnabas Dyedi would like to begin monthly joint worship services beginning later this summer.

Unfinished Business Eva and Brenda shared their stories of inspiration and experiences at the Synod Assembly.

New Business None.

Announcements Sarah will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Brenda Spahr, Secretary



How do we listen with our full selves? In reality, all of our senses are used when we listen – with our ears, our eyes, our mouths, and our bodies. As disciples, we listen to ourselves, our neighbors, and God. When we listen, we find new perspectives, shared history, and common ground.

Questions to Consider:

- What is something you learned from listening to your heart?
- What is something you learned from listening to a stranger?
- In a year of GOING, how will you listen to those around you?

Prayer: Listening God, help me stay open to the surprises you provide while on the road this summer. Amen.

Pastor Laaker



And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

2 Corinthians 9:14

Please keep in your prayers the individuals listed below who have health issues and concerns:

Vicki Cox
Samuel Mantzaris
Pam Reents
Urbano Vasquez



June Hilmer
Carolyn Matson
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 and Moses Loda are the elders for the Sudanese Worshipping 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
June Hilmer - 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!



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 Janet, Donna, Ron, and Eva, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly Grace Messenger!

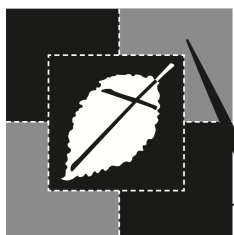
Thank you Alma for keeping both Grace and St. Luke's clean and looking so welcoming to everyone who enters.

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!



As our congregations have conversations with the Synod, we continue to be thoughtful around all questions raised by you. Both councils have determined that while the Synod works through the property comparisons, our congregations also ought to be familiar with the entirety of both properties. Therefore, beginning Sunday July 2nd following worship service, we will be conducting tours of Grace Lutheran and encourage all to participate. If you are unable to attend, we will facilitate these tours throughout the month at Grace, and in August tours will take place at St. Luke's. Please consider attending!





You are invited to Carol Joy Holling Camp's

Quilt Auction

Saturday, July 29, 2023

Starts at 9 a.m.

Quilts handcrafted by individuals,
congregations, and
groups from Nebraska and beyond
will be auctioned
to fund summer camp scholarships.

View quilts, schedule, and more:

CJHCenter.org/quilt-auction

**More than just an auction! Bring the family for
a day of fun: camp tours, BBQ lunch, and more!**

Free parking & admission!

Carol Joy Holling Camp
27416 Ranch Road, Ashland, NE 68003



8 – Charles Farber
9 – Madison Emery
11 – Urbano Vasquez
17 – Caleb Ketelson
20 – Dustin Moyer
24 – Angela Everitt
25 – Samantha Moyer

Did we miss your birthday? Please contact the church office and let us know!



Happy Birthday in faith! May blessings be upon you! On your birthday, remember that you were wonderfully made by God and rejoice in God's 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.




The Durham Museum is bringing back its "\$5 after 5" promotion that allows people of all ages to visit the museum for only \$5 after 5:00 pm every Tuesday through the month of August. Hours are Noon to 8:00 pm on Tuesdays, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday, Wednesday thru Saturday and Noon to 4:00 pm on Sundays. If you have not seen the new exhibits, summertime is a great time to plan your next visit!

Current exhibits include *Towers of Tomorrow with Lego Bricks* and *The Lunchbox: Packed with Pop Culture*. Both Exhibits are at the Durham until September 3rd.

The Omaha Public Library Downtown Branch at 1401 Jones is now open. The hours of operation are: Monday - Thursday from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm, Friday/Saturday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm.

This Summer's Reading Program will end on July 31st. The Kids' and Teens' Program will give participants two free books when they register. After completing 10 hours of reading/listening activities various prizes will be given. For additional information please call the Downtown Branch at 402-444-4828.



 **ELCA** The United Nations World Food Programme recently warned that **acute food insecurity has reached an unprecedented high, affecting a record 349 million people — up from 135 million in 2019.** That is a shocking statistic. ELCA World Hunger partners here in the United States and around the world are telling us about the financial strain caused by the rising hunger crisis, and we come to you humbly, **asking for a donation.**

Through ELCA World Hunger you support families as they address root causes of hunger and poverty through such multifaceted solutions as education, agricultural training and microloans for women. Our faith calls us to be in relationship with our neighbors, and that is what makes your partnership so important.

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.



American Red Cross As we get ready to celebrate Independence Day, many of us plan to attend fireworks displays, a backyard picnic, or perhaps enjoy fun at the beach. The American Red Cross offers these tips so you can enjoy a fun-packed, safe holiday.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public firework show put on by professionals. Stay at least 500 feet away from the show. Many states outlaw most fireworks. Leave any area immediately where untrained amateurs are using fireworks. If you are setting fireworks off at home, follow these safety steps:

Never give fireworks to small children, and never throw or point a firework toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials. Always follow the instructions on the packaging.

Keep a supply of water close by as a precaution.

Make sure the person lighting fireworks always wears eye protection.

Light only one firework at a time and never attempt to relight a "dud."

Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.

redcross.org

A Chaplain's Prayer

Rev. Everett Wabst of Staten Island, NY, a New York Fire Department Chaplain, still carries around and distributes a card with the prayer of his friend, Fr. Mychal Judge, a New York Fire Department Chaplain who was killed in the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

The card, which Rev. Wabst sent to JoyfulNoiseletter, reads:

"Lord, take me where you want me to go. Let me meet who you want me to meet. Tell me what you want me to say, and keep me out of Your way."



Shared with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com



Keeping Cool And Green

While good ol' ventilation is still the most environmentally-friendly and cost effective way to cool your home, not everyone is lucky enough to have lots of strategically placed windows to catch the least bit of cross breeze.

Two-thirds of all homes in the United States have air conditioners. Air conditioners use about 5% of all the electricity produced in the United States, at an annual cost of more than \$11 billion to homeowners. So when the weather warms up we should do everything we can to conserve energy as we keep cool. That means treating our airconditioners the same way we treat other energy-demanding appliances: by using them wisely and keeping them running efficiently. Here are some tips to help:

Invest in an energy-efficient air conditioner. If you're buying a new air conditioner, choose one for maximum energy efficiency. New air conditioners come labeled with an Energy Efficiency Rating (EER), a standard that lets you calculate how much electricity the air conditioner will consume. The higher the EER, the less it will cost you to operate the appliance to achieve the same level of cooling.

Avoid overcooling. Don't use or buy more cooling equipment capacity than you actually need. If you decide on central air conditioning, select the most energy-efficient unit that will cool the size space you have. Bigger is not better. A larger unit that you need will cost more to run and may not remove enough humidity from the air, the feature that some consumers like most about air conditioners.

Keep your cooling system well tuned. Have it professionally maintained, and ask how the energy efficiency of the system may be increased.

Install a whole-house ventilating fan. This can be put in your attic or in an upstairs window to cool the house, even if you have central air conditioning. According to Consumer Reports, a big fan working under the right conditions can cool and ventilate an entire house for about the energy cost of running an airconditioner in one room.

Set your thermostat as high as possible. 78 degrees Farenheit is often recommended as a reasonably comfortable and energy-efficient indoor temperature.

Draw the blinds. Reduce the need for the A/C by keeping shades drawn, especially on south-facing windows.

Program the thermostat. Set the thermostat higher during the day when no one is in your house or apartment.

green tips from earthshare.org

Teacher: Tommy, can you tell us where the Declaration of Independence was signed?

Tommy: Yes, ma'am. At the bottom.

Submitted by Luke M., Morganton, NC

Justin: Why does the Statue of Liberty stand in New York Harbor?

Gerald: Why?

Justin: Because she can't sit down.

Submitted by Justin A., Oquawka, IL

Johnny: Does Europe have a 4th of July?

Josh: No.

Johnny: Yes, it does. It comes right after the 3rd of July.

Submitted by Jude P. D., Rayne, LA

Harry: What do you call an American drawing?

John: What?

Harry: Yankee doodle!

Submitted by Aubrey T., Jackson, MS

Teacher: More than 200 years ago, our forefathers defeated the British in the Revolutionary War.

Caleb: Wow! They must have been pretty strong, four men defeating a whole army!

Submitted by Caleb B., Borfield, IL

Robert: What did the colonists wear to the Boston Tea Party?

John: I don't know.

Robert: Tea-shirts.

Submitted by John D., Richmond, VA

Jokes were shared from Boyslife.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.

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!



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, Diaper wipes, and Diapers, especially sizes 6 and pull-ups.

We always need paper or plastic bags.

Loaves and Fishes Pantry

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

Pantry is Open 10:00 - 11:00 am
Every Monday ~ Even Holidays!



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. Clients of the Loaves and Fishes Pantry are asked to park along Poppleton Street. They are then directed through the alley to pick up prepared sacks and bags of much needed food items. **The Pantry is in need of clean plastic grocery bags and paper grocery sacks!** 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.

1611 1/2 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

TABLE GRACE
Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

Hours for Breakfast and Lunch
Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri & Sat. from 7 - 2
Closed: Wed and Sun

Specialty Coffee, Pastries, Bagels, Pizza, Soup, Salad, Daily Specials!
No set prices. Community Cafe - donate instead of pay.
Eat here - feed the Community.

Ways you can donate: Paypal nhbs.cc/paypal * 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.

On a thundering rainy day, a Mom went to pick up her 6-year-old son from school, thinking that he was afraid of lightning, But she found him smiling at the sky after every lighting strike.

"Why are you smiling?" she asked.

"Because God is taking my picture and I need to look good," he answered.



~ via Joygerm Joan White, Syracuse, NY

THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"Could the snake really talk, or was it like one of the Muppets?"

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
©Bil & Jeff Keane
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"I love people who make me laugh. I honestly think it's the thing I like most - to laugh. It cures a multitude of ills. It's probably the most important thing in a person."

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

Jokes reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com

A little boy opened the big, old family Bible with fascination, and looked at the old pages as he turned them. Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Momma, look what I found," the boy called out.

"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered: "I think it's Adam's suit!"

joke shared by christiansunite.com

4th of July Word Search

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



AMERICA
BLUE
BRITAIN
DECLARATION
FIREWORKS
FLAG
FOURTH

FREEDOM
INDEPENDENCE
JULY
LIBERTY
NATION
PARADE
RED

REVOLUTION
RIGHTS
STATES
SUMMER
THIRTEEN
UNITED
WHITE



One day a six-year-old boy told his father, "I'm going outside and play ball with God."

"So how do you play ball with God?" the father asked?

"Oh, it's not hard at all," the boy replied. "I just throw the ball up, and God throws it back down to me."

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