

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

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Like us on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/gracelutheranomaha
www.facebook.com/stlukesomaha

AUGUST SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 am. Worship Service
St. Luke's Lutheran, 2315 "I" Street

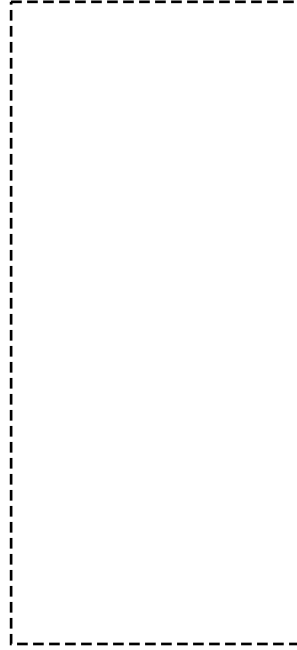
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office July 26



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THE GRACE
MESSENGER
1889 - 2023

St. Luke's
Echo
1905 - 2023

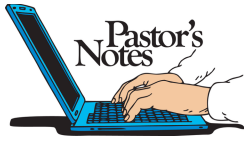


August Worship Services
will be held at St. Luke's
Lutheran, 2315 I Street



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
stlukesomaha.org



Jack Alexander in his book, "The God Guarantee," begins with a story about a boy, Jaden Hayes, who has had a hard childhood. His father died when he was four, and then just two years later, Jaden discovered his mother's body after she died in her sleep.

The six-year-old boy stoically endured another funeral and then went to live with his aunt. According to multiple news reports, he told her he was "tired of all the sad faces." He wanted to know how to make people happy again. She suggested the best way to make someone smile is to smile at them first. And so, just weeks after his mother's death, Jaden began what's become known as the Smile Experiment. He and his aunt went into the city of Savannah, near their Georgia home, and approached people who looked sad or serious. Jaden would smile at them and – to hedge his bets – offer them a small toy.

"It's like sheer joy came of this child," said his aunt. "And the more people that he made smile, the more this light shone." A big question arises, "How could a boy who lost so much be able to give so much?"

Instead of giving in, as we are so often tempted to do, Jaden overcame. In a world driven by isolation, doubt and perhaps most of all, scarcity, this boy found a way through.

I can't help but think that maybe this same sense of scarcity attends us. Our giving is less than what we need in both congregations, our worship numbers don't reflect the days gone by, our Sunday Schools are barren of children. So, we play the what if game. What if we lose one more family? What if we are not able to maintain our building? What if the pastor retires and we don't get another pastor for a long time? What if I don't have enough energy to volunteer as needed? What if we don't have enough folks willing to be on the Council? What if . . . ?

I've had the privilege of listening and leading these two congregations and have heard these what ifs from the very beginning of my ministry forty-five years ago. I don't think we can ever quit the what ifs. However, I do believe that God has a reason for these ministries and if we are willing to lean into our faith and listen for God's direction, then we have the capacity to find our way through.

Continued.....

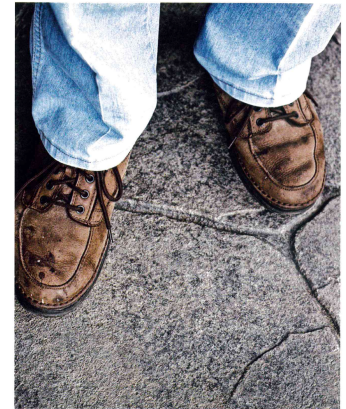
Maybe it is as simple as smiling to one another. Maybe we can be curious enough to greet someone we don't know. Maybe we can find a way to be more generous. Maybe we can let go of our fears and find hope in God's goodness, love and generosity. Maybe we can . . . you fill in the blank.

I wonder if we might be willing to Go and share your story. Share the story of your faith journey that includes the disappointment, the pain, the loss, the delights and the joys. God has a way of using those stories to bring life, delight and smiles.

Pastor Laaker



Kathy Anderson



Will Voss

The Nebraska Synod shared the "Go, And..." themes for this coming year at the Assembly 2023. Rev. Maristela Freiberg, keynote speaker, asked participants to write their name on an image of feet as she delivered her presentations on the "Go, And..." theme. She invited all attending to take a name/image home to keep in prayer, but not everyone had a chance to take an image with them.

Pictured above are the images recently received by both St. Luke's and Grace. As a congregation, please take the opportunity to pray for both individuals listed above during this year of "Go, And..." as we celebrate being church together.



Grace 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

Council Notes ~ July 11, 2023

Call to Order Pastor called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

Gathering of Prayers We ask for prayers for individuals with relationships to council members. We also pray for victims of floods, heat, ongoing global conflicts, victims of recent motorcycle accidents, and 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 Ecclesiastes 3:22 and Colossians 3:17. The first verse reminds us to be aware of God’s love every day and the second reminds us to give thanks to God in both good and bad times. Both remind us of the song “The Lord is good to me...”

Visions for Ministry Do I Stay Christian? by Brian McLaren
Council discussed Chapters 11 & 12. Council agreed that the first 10 chapters were challenging to read as the book directed our awareness to the not-so-good history of Christianity and that chapters 11 and 12 are easier to read since the next 10 chapters give us hope. Many endure struggles, for example: Black Lives Matter, LGBTQIA+ Community, women not being accepted as ordained within the church, even as the struggles continue, we as people will not stop until we achieve justice for if we stop, evil wins. Council looks forward to reading and discussing chapters 13 and 14 for next month’s meeting.

Minutes The minutes of the regular June 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.

Continued...

Mission Share The monthly Mission Share contribution has not increased as per the budget, we will adjust accordingly for the remainder of 2023. The San Andres contribution was made in June – ending with 100% of our pledge for both.

Committee Reports

Christian Education Pastor will have two young people in confirmation classes beginning in the fall.

Evangelism/Outreach Pastor will be driving Barnabas Dyedi to Lincoln next Tuesday for his interviews in the next steps toward Barnabas’ entry into the Nebraska Synod Candidacy Program.
Nebraska Brass sent an email offering their concert schedule for future concerts this season. Council has decided to pass for the 23-24 season.

Finance Council ratified the Disney Endowment Distributions submitted to the Council.

Property Quantum Voice Professional is not a possibility for Grace, however, they were very helpful in directing us to Ooma which seems to be a better fit. Ron moved to try the 60 day free trial and Greg seconded. Motion carried.
The A/C units will be repaired after the summer has passed.

Service/Social Ministry The Lutheran Service Corps will be closing, only 10 college students applied nationwide.

Support/Stewardship None.

Worship Pastor will meet with Barnabas Dyedi to discuss the possibility of a joint worship service later this month.

Unfinished Business This Sunday will be the last tour held here at Grace.

New Business The Grace Messenger and the St. Luke’s Echo will be combined starting this August.

Announcements Sarah will prepare a prayer for next month.

Adjournment The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Brenda Spahr, Secretary



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



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:

Richard Burney - Omaha Nursing
Vicki Cox - Home
Barbara Nelson - Life Care Center, Elkhorn
Dee Nielsen - Peyton, CO
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills
Jeri Swanson - Hillcrest Estates
Marilyn Van Ormer - Home
Doris Westman - Hillcrest Estates

Dolores Castro - Home
Arline Henni - Heritage at Legacy



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!

Stewardship

For years, when you crossed the state line from Iowa to Nebraska, you were met with the sign which read: Nebraska – The good life. What exactly does that mean? I suspect it means different things to different people.

I appreciate [this definition](#) from Leon Ho, Founder & CEO of Lifehacker: “A good life can be described as a life that is self-satisfying and self-fulfilling. It is characterized by personal joy, fulfillment, and enjoyment of the small pleasures of life. When someone says their life is good, it means that they can access the basic things that give them comfort and pleasure.” However, as people of faith we know there is more to it than just creating a good life for myself, it's also about helping others find the good life too and pointing them to the author of that good life in the process.

As I reflect on the good life, I can't help but think about the ministries that are part of Grace Lutheran and St. Luke's Lutheran. Since these two congregations were started in different parts of the city years ago, I suspect the meaning of a good life was similar but none the less different. Ministries to children and families. Ministries to communities in need. Ministries with partners whose work went beyond the borders of this state.

As the definition above suggests, our support of these ministries now and in the past is about more than just creating a good life for ourselves, it's also about helping others find the good life too and pointing them to the author of that good life.

How might you be more fully engaged in creating the good life for others and in turn finding the blessing of a good life for you?

Pastor Laaker



Show by
your good life
that your works
are done with
gentleness
born of wisdom.

James 3:13, NRSV



St. Luke's 2023 Council Members

Steve Braun	Annette Chipman	Frank Durham
Cindy Fleming	John Kolb	Dave Ruffner
Molly Sedlacek	Connie Tefft	Pastor Laaker

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Treasurer: Nancy Klusaw

Financial Secretary & Memorial/Special Gifts: Rose Marie Lad

Council Meeting Notes ~ July 13, 2023

Devotions: Pastor Laaker led devotions from Daily Texts – Genesis 37:22 and 1 Thessalonians 5:15

Agenda: The Agenda was adopted by motion.

Minutes of June 2023, meeting: Minutes adopted by motion.

Book Study: Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 of Clear Calm Connected were discussed. Please read Chapter 10 and Chapter 11 for the August 2023 meeting.

Unfinished Business:

1. Roof repair update: Steve Braun called McKinnis Roofing. McKinnis Roofing is working with our insurance company. Hopefully, a plan will come in August.
2. Canopy South update: The building is being worked on, especially on the second floor.
3. Nancy Klusaw's first week: Nancy reported that she is doing well in her new position.

Reports:

Pastor's Report – A written report was provided. Pastor Laaker shared information from various meetings he has attended including the Omaha Police Department, OTOC Immigration and Refugee Taskforce, Bread for the Word, Metro Cluster ministers.

President's Report – A written report was provided. Highlights included: thanks to John Kolb, thanks to Steve Braun, several members toured Grace.

Continued...

Treasurer/Finance Report – A written report was provided.

Financial Secretary's Report – A written report was provided.

Memorial Fund Report – A written report was provided.

Building and Grounds Report – An oral report was given. Pastor Laaker will contact Martinez Yard Service regarding bush and tree trimming in the parking lot. Cindy Fleming made the motion to order an incoming/outgoing mailbox for the church for mail delivery. Molly Sedlacek seconded. Motion carried.

Evangelism – An oral report was given. John Kolb reminded us of our church motto and encouraged all to remember it.

Fellowship – No report.

Stewardship – An oral report was given. Quarterly financial reports have been generated and will begin being distributed on Sunday, July 15.

Parish Education – Sara Pahl-Ramirez continues to provide information for the monthly Echo.

Social Ministry – An oral report was given. The Salvation Army Kroc Center received 40 swimsuits in various sizes. Thank you to all who participated in the Splish Splash Let's Help Kids Have A Blast swimsuit drive.

Worship and Music – An oral report was given. Hymn selection meeting will occur on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.

New Business:

1. Worship plans for the upcoming months: We will continue alternating months with Grace.
2. Tour of St. Luke's in August: No tour on August 6 due to special congregational meeting. Tours will occur on August 13 and August 20.

The next Council Meeting: Thursday, August 10, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting closed with prayer at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Fleming, Secretary

Sara Pahl-Ramirez recently had surgery and will return to writing for the newsletter next month.





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 Adrian, Deb Ludwig and Brenda Spahr for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.

Thanks to everyone that helped with worship services during the month of July. It is much appreciated.

Thank you Bob and Connie Malik for taking the July Echo to the Post Office and for setting up tables for the South Omaha Community Care Council.

Thank you Janet, Andrea, Ethan, and Eva, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly Grace Messenger!

Thank you to all those that help keep both church grounds neat by picking up trash around the churches.

Thank you Alma for keeping both Grace and St. Luke's clean and 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 food items away until Monday mornings, getting everything ready for Mondays and in greeting and serving all with smiles, care and love!

Path Assist, now available in your area, connects you to the resources you need to be healthy and improve the quality of your life. The Path Assist program is designed to help you confidently navigate local health and social service resources and advocate for your needs. The goal of Path Assist is to help you address issues like housing, food, transportation, access to medicine, isolation, and more before they become serious problems. Path Assist is a free program, you can sign up on their website at: www.path-assist.com/gethelp or call 402-265-6551.

**PATH
ASSIST**



2 – Vicki Cox

**3 – Bobbi Jo Pankaj
Joseph Everitt**

**13 – Daniel King
Barisila Koka**

23 – Charles Emery

Grace's

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.

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

Pastor Laaker will be teaching Confirmation classes beginning in September. If you have a young adult entering the 8th grade who is interested in attending classes, please speak with Pastor Laaker.




TABLE GRACE CAFE
Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

1611 1/2 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

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](https://www.paypal.com/paypal/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).

 **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.

Grace Lutheran and St. Luke's have 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 and some businesses will donate 5% to a charity of your choice ~ either St. Luke's or Grace.

Register your **Bakers Plus card** with Kroger and choose Grace or St. Luke's as your charitable choice!

Ronald McDonald House: Save your pop tabs. They use the proceeds to pay the utilities. A box is provided in the back of the sanctuary for the tabs. Our most recent contribution of pop tabs brings our total to 129,000.

Eye Glasses. Do you have old eye glasses that you no longer use? A box is located in the back of the sanctuary to place them. They will be given to the Lion's Club to be used for individuals in need.

 "The only science that gives purpose to every other science is the science of religion - the science of our happy dependence on God and our neighbor."

~ Fr. Solanus Casey

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Joy

St. Luke's



11 – Gabriel Noah

15 – Zane Petersen

16 – Janice Puckett



15 – Michael & Cynthia Fleming

25 – Mike & Donna Pierce

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? 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.



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. Tours of the Grace building were held in July following worship service. Beginning August 13th tours will take place in St. Luke's Lutheran Church. All are encouraged to participate, please consider attending!

 St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, August 10, 2023 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Karen Chapman will have devotions, Cindy Fleming the lesson and Rose Marie Lad will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome.





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.

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. Participants 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. *All are served with love and care.*

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

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.

Joy

"In Paul's letter to the Philippians, joy is the theme throughout. Chapter 1 explains that there is joy in living; chapter 2, joy in serving; chapter 3, joy in sharing; chapter 4, joy in resting."

~ Rev. Paul Lintern, Mansfield, OH
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JESUS FEEDS 5000

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BASKETS
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HUNGRY
MEN
THANKS
WOMEN

BOAT
CROWD
FOOD
JESUS
MIRACLE
THOUSAND

BOY
DISCIPLES
GRASS
LEFTOVERS
PROPHET
TWELVE

BREAD
FISH
HEALED
LOAVES
SEA OF GALILEE
TWO



"Ancient Egyptians believed that upon death they would be asked two questions, and their answers would determine whether they could continue their journey in the afterlife. The first question was, "Did you bring joy?" The second was, "Did you find joy?"

~ Leo Buscaglia, via Joseph Basehart, Aurora, CO
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