

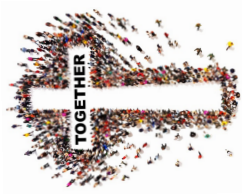
St. Luke's Lutheran Church
2315 "I" Street
Omaha, NE 68107-1814
402-733-5881

Email: stlukes@stlukesomaha.org
graceluth@graceluth.com
Web Site: www.stlukesomaha.org
www.graceluth.com
Like us on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/stlukesomaha
www.facebook.com/gracelutheranomaha

MAY SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 am. Worship Service
Grace Lutheran, 1326 S 26th Street

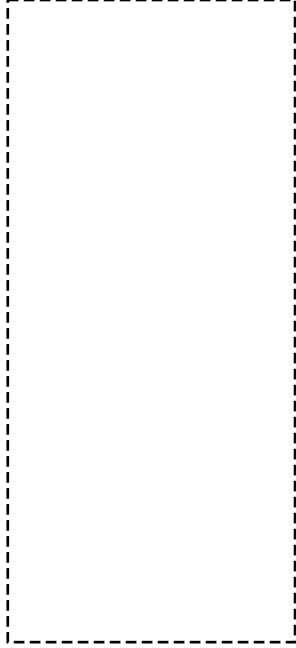
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office May 2



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Omaha NE
Permit No. 442

Return Service Requested
Dated Material



St. Luke's
Echo

1905 - 2025

THE GRACE
MESSENGER

1889 - 2025



May Worship Services will be held at
Grace Lutheran, 1326 S. 26th Street

Grow, Love, Serve

Connect with us on the web: stlukesomaha.org
graceluth.com



I receive a devotional each day from the Center for Action and Contemplation. I am choosing to share one of those devotionals that touches a real cord in me. The devotional was titled:

Protecting Our Own Light.

Brian McLaren considers how authoritarian systems seek conformity. He highlights practices of contemplation and community that can strengthen our resolve and enable us to remain “salt and light” under difficult circumstances.

An expert in authoritarian regimes, Sarah Kendzior captures the danger like this: Authoritarianism is not merely a matter of state control, it is something that eats away at who you are. It makes you afraid, and fear can make you cruel. It compels you to conform and to comply and accept things that you would never accept, to do things you never thought you would do.

No wonder, in a time of authoritarian Ceasar-worship, the early Christian leader Paul wrote, “Do not be conformed to this world. But be transformed by the renewal of your minds.” (Romans 12:2). Kendzior addresses this very need for inner renewal and transformation. Authoritarian regimes, she says, ...can take everything from you in material terms – your house, your job, your ability to speak and move freely. They cannot take away who you truly are. They can never truly know you, and this is your power. But to protect and wield this power, you need to know yourself – right now, before their methods permeate, before you accept the obscene and unthinkable as normal.

Although she doesn't use the word contemplation, Kendzior points to the importance of knowing who we are, centering into what Howard Thurman called “the sound of the genuine” inside us. She continues, ...We are heading into dark times, and you need to be your own light. Do not accept brutality and cruelty as normal even if it is sanctioned. Protect the vulnerable and encourage the afraid. If you are brave, stand up for others. If you cannot be brave – and it is often hard to be brave – be kind. But most of all, never lose sight of who you are and what you value.

Continued....

I am thinking about these authoritarian patterns not only to better understand what's happening now in my country. I'm also trying to understand my own country's history – how millions of so-called Christians in the {United States} consented to the genocide of Indigenous peoples and then consented to the enslavement of kidnapped and trafficked Africans and then consented to the American apartheid in the Jim Crow era and then resisted the civil rights movement.

Studying biases and authoritarianism is also helping me understand in a deeper way why contemplative practices, and especially contemplative practices in community are so important right now.

Contemplative practices are many things. Our Christian tradition teaches us that they are pathways into the direct experience of divine presence and love. Contemporary neuroscience adds that they are also pathways into self-regulation...Contemplative practices – both solitary and communal – help us resist conformity with wisdom and courage.

May we know ourselves, resist conformity with wisdom and courage.

Pastor Laaker

Omaha Together One Community would like to thank you again for being an auction donor for OTOC: Celebrating Community 2025. Your contribution was a big part of the success of our event. Our event was attended by over 300 people and additional people participated online. We were able to raise over \$14,000 from our silent auction. We are already looking ahead to next year and will soon pick a date for our 2026 event.



Your donation of The Cozy Irish Cocoa Basket received a value bid for \$115. Thank you again for your support!





2025 Transition Team

Vicki Cox	Frank Durham	Sarah Emery
Vicki Hall	Janet Hula	Nancy Klusaw
John Kolb	Andrea Spahr	Brenda Spahr
Connie Tefft	Pastor Laaker	

Officers Serving the Congregation:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Nancy Klusaw

St. Luke's/Grace Lutheran Transition Team Notes - April 8, 2025

The meeting opened at 5:30 p.m. with a gathering of prayers for individuals & communities.

Devotions were shared from the Daily Texts.

From the "I am a follower" book - discussions around a number of thoughts. How do we decide the appropriate way to be a follower, and not focus on leadership. How do we get folks to follow along with us? Followership - what is this and what does it mean to us. Leading / leadership from behind...guiding and directing while allowing others to take control. Live by example, and be a true follower of Christ. Creates a different sense in what we typically encounter. Will this stimulate us to think differently?

Financial Secretary and Treasurer reports were received.

The team reviewed The Readiness Inventory and gave rankings for seven readiness factors. Will continue conversations around each of the factors, one at a time as we move forward.

Shared future considerations:

New Name / Same Name

One / Two locations

Outreach programs

Property Condition / upkeep

Visibility vs neighborhood

Parking lots

Endowments

Real Estate & associated costs



Consider
God's
Wonders

Continued...

Mission Words:

Grow - 5 Early Communion folks on Palm Sunday; celebration! Highland Elementary School to hold summer program at St. Lukes; 730-430 M-F from May 27 - July 25. 40-50 kids. Last Sunday we had 3 new individuals show up for service & seem interested in continuing. Lenten services continue.

Love - Pastor Omar in discussion. Licensure in place, United Methodist Church has given approval. Concerns increasing around food.

Serve - St. Luke's walkway fixed, all costs covered by insurance & endowment. Grace will hold the Crossroads Community worship & meal on April 27. LFS came with a van and were quite touched with the donations. St. Luke's - concert on 4/30 for Bobby Jo Valentine. Good Friday will be at Augustana with multiple congregations.

Meeting was closed in prayer at 6:45 p.m.

Volunteers Assisting Seniors to help with Homestead Exemption

**Will be at Grace Lutheran Church
Thursday, May 8, 2025
9:00 am to Noon**



The Nebraska Homestead Exemption program offers eligible property owners reduced property taxes. To determine eligibility, a property owner must complete and submit the Nebraska Homestead Exemption application and Income Statement to your county's Assessor Office until June 30th. For more information about eligibility (including age, income and property value requirements) visit the state of Nebraska's website at: <https://revenue.nebraska.gov/PAD/homestead-exemption>. Call your County Assessor's office to request an application.

A complete listing of additional dates, times, and locations can be found on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall, or available upon request.

Appointments can be made until June 30th. Call VAS at 402-444-6617 to schedule your appointment or to get more information.
www.vas-nebraska.org



Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.

1 Kings 8:28

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

Marcia Beck
June Hilmer
Samuel Mantzaris
Ed Nodean
Marilyn Van Ormer
The family of Eva Martin



Vicki Cox
Richard Krambeck
Carolyn Matson
Pam Reents



Pray for wisdom for your Church Transition Team at St. Luke's and 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, St. Luke's and Grace Lutheran Churches
Bishop Scott Johnson, Nebraska Synod
Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Charles Tuw, Moses Loda, John Boato, Barnaba Dyedi and Nenchi Ilka are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

Pray for our Shut-ins and Nursing Home residents:

Dolores Castro - Home
Vicki Cox - Home
Richard Krambeck - Trinity Villiage, Papillion
Dee Nielsen - Peyton, CO
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills
Marilyn Van Ormer - Home
Doris Westman - Hillcrest Estates



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 Deb and Vicki for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.

Thank you Rod, Jean, Robin and Miriam for sharing your music ministry with us and providing beautiful music during worship services!

Thank you Brenda, Sara, Connie and Shirley for reading during worship services in April. It is greatly appreciated.

Thank you Sara for your dedication in preparing the Bible Study and sharing your ministry every month in the Newsletter.

Thank you Bob for greeting everyone who enters the door before worship services every Sunday morning during the month of April. It is a welcoming way to begin the Sunday morning arrival every week.

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

Thank you Janet, Mary, Bob, Connie, Rose Marie, Ron, Donna, and John, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly newsletter!

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 foods items away until Monday mornings, getting everything ready for Mondays and in greeting and serving all with smiles, care and love!



Stewardship

**Yesterday, today and tomorrow:
80 years of your compassion**



In 1945, our Lutheran forebearers joined together to be the Body of Christ in the world, responding boldly to the needs of our neighbors in Europe after World War II.

For 80 years, you have served our neighbors in their greatest hour of need. You go where no one else goes, and you stay as long as needed to minister to neighbors affected by poverty, hunger, sickness, violence and more.

"NO MATTER HOW FAR..." Floods, earthquakes, war and other emergencies affect everyone, but it's the world's poorest who suffer most. That's why Lutheran World Relief is there to offer help and hope, wherever and whenever disaster strikes. Clean water. Nourishing food. Safe shelter. Emergency supplies. Time and again, you act quickly to rush aid where it's needed most.

This incredible outpouring of support for neighbors in crisis began in 1945 and has continued with each new generation of Lutherans.

YESTERDAY: For more than 80 years, your compassion has been there, reaching the most vulnerable in their darkest moments.

TODAY: Through a waste management program, farmer Rehmuli Sembiring and her husband Adit Sinulingga learned to produce organic fertilizers. Besides being better for their lands, it's also less expensive, meaning the savings can go towards the children's education.

TOMORROW: You're changing that for girls like Salamatu Conteh, who at only 13, is at risk of dropping out of school. Your compassion is providing opportunities with cash grants and innovative technology to keep girls in school. By addressing both financial and non-financial barriers, you are helping our neighbors beat the odds to stay on a path to a brighter future.

IN THE LONG TERM: Emergency relief is essential in a crisis, but you don't stop there.

The world's poorest families need lasting solutions, not just relief. The world's poorest families need more than relief, they need lasting change. By supporting farmers, creating job opportunities for youth and improving health and education, we can help break the cycle of poverty together.

Sustainable development takes time, but love is patient. And although this work rarely makes the news, your impact truly transforms lives for generations.

BIBLE STUDY This month, we look at the prophet Zechariah, called to prophesy only a couple of months after the prophet Haggai. Seventy years of exile in Babylon had passed, and the first returnees had arrived in Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Haggai and Zechariah were post-exile prophets in Israel. Ezekiel, who prophesied the siege of Jerusalem, had also received very detailed instructions for rebuilding the Temple. (See Ezekiel, chapters forty and following.) All three shared some common concerns from God, with each other, with Ezra and, later, Nehemiah.

The book of Zechariah is clearly divided into Part I, chapters 1-8, and Part II, chapters 9-14. The second part shows a mix of themes, including the failure of the shepherds of Israel, similar to Ezekiel's chapter 34, which, though, is more detailed. Part II also contains an oracle against a foreign nation, and an endtimes battle for Jerusalem - quite confusing! Since it could not have been written before Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, we will lay it aside and focus mostly on Part I. However, Part II does hold a messianic hope, voiced in these words which we heard just recently during worship:

" Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you,
Triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on an ass,
on a colt, the foal of an ass." Zech. 9:9 (RSV)

In Part I of Zechariah, the world has changed. There are no more kings of Israel and Judah. Assyria has risen and fallen, as has Babylon. Now the Persians lead the world, and King Darius has appointed Zerubbabel to guide the rebuilding of the Temple in Palestine. That's in the world of political power. Postexilic Israel is a world in which religious leaders are coming into their own, so Joshua, the High Priest, is also very important. The middle eastern world is becoming more and more like the one into which Jesus, the Messiah, will be born.

Zechariah points to a new age of union with the Lord, an age of hope and wholeness.

" Thus says the Lord: I will return to Zion
and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem will be called the faithful city,
and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts.
the Holy Mountain." Zech. 8:3 (RSV)

to be continued...

Sara welcomes comments and questions at: 402-686-1693.

Marry Month of Memories

June is a popular month for weddings, often referred to as the “June bride” month, due to several factors including pleasant weather, the availability of fresh flowers, and a historical association with the Roman goddess Juno, who was the protector of marriage.



Just For Fun... We are asking you to share a portrait or photo of you and your spouse on your wedding day. We plan to display the pictures during coffee hour the last two Sundays in June. Please bring your photo to Grace any Sunday during May or to St. Luke's on Sunday, June 1st, 8th, or 15th. Include your names and date of your marriage. Come and share a favorite memory from your special day!

Your picture will be returned to you the following month. See Janet Hula with questions.



St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, May 8, 2025 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Teri Durham will have devotions, Deb Ludwig the lesson and Karen Chapman will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome to come join in the learning, conversation and refreshments.

Blessings to the five young children that completed their early Communion classes and received their first Communion on Palm Sunday;

Gabriel Noah,
Payton Klusaw,
Jordan Vazquez,
Raleigh Klusaw, and
Aubrielle Noah



May God surround you with the continued yearning to learn and grow in your faith and relationship with God.



SAFE 2025

JUNE 7TH 1-4PM
GENE LEAHY MALL
1001 DOUGLAS STREET

The Southeast Precinct is excited to invite you to participate and/or volunteer in the kick off a **SAFE** summer at our **22nd annual S.A.F.E. 2025** (Safety Awareness Fitness and Education) event. Join us for this fun and informational event on **Saturday, June 7th from 1 - 4pm at Gene Leahy Mall on 1001 Douglas St.**

S.A.F.E. 2025 is a **FREE**, fun, family oriented community event. There will be demos from Omaha Police Department: ABLE One, Mounted Patrol, Bike patrol, ERU, the Omaha Fire Department's Smoke House and fire engine, Nebraska State Patrol, and more. There will be important agency booths, bike safety information, clowns, face painting, games, music, hotdogs and free raffles.

S.A.F.E. 2025 offers an opportunity for families to collect valuable information, learn about safety, staying healthy and a great way to spend a nice afternoon with family, friends and your friendly officers. Please help us spread the word about this event and if you would like to volunteer, please contact me at your earliest convenience at Ofelia.robles@cityofomaha.org.



Work Day! May 17, 2025

You're all invited to Work Day on Saturday, May 17th. All skill levels are needed! Breakfast will be served at 8:00 am and we will work until lunch around 12:30 pm. For food planning purposes, we ask individuals or groups to RSVP by May 9, 2025.

To register or to learn of additional events, visit: CJHCenter.org/upcoming-retreats.



Grace Lutheran and St. Luke's have some additional ways that you could contribute without spending any out of pocket funds.

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? Please give your old eye glasses to Janice Fulmer. They will be given to the Lion's Club to be used for individuals in need.



"988" The Nation's Mental Health Hotline

"988" has been activated as the new three-digit mental health program hotline. 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



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.

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, paper grocery sacks and egg cartons!** 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.

There is a variety of volunteer opportunities for anyone interested.
Call the church office for additional information.



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 for suggested items in need. If you have any questions, please call Project Hope's office at 402-453-7649. Clothing Pantry Hours are Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm.

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.



Happy Gardening
Everyone!

Jokes and poems reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com

God's kids say & do the funniest things

Fr. Richard Carton, associate pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Church, Mountain Lakes, NJ, was speaking to a group of second graders about the Resurrection when one student asked "What did Jesus say right after He came out of the grave?"

It was a question of great theological importance, but Fr. Carton had to explain, in words suitable to his young audience, that the Gospels do not tell us just what He said.

The hand of one little girl shot up. "I know what He said, Father," she insisted.

"And what was that?" asked Father Carton.

"Ta-da!" the girl exclaimed.

~ Andy Fisher, Denville, NJ

Mother's Day Word Trails

Find and connect the trail of letters for each word. The trails can wander up, down, left, right, and diagonally.

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

children

stepmother

childcare

newborn

reminisce

giving

devotion

sheltering

card

loving

maternal

supervise

appreciate

gift

caretaker

Sunday

treasure

fondness

matriarch

mama

daughter

motherhood

warmhearted

respect

thankful

celebrate

sympathetic

grateful

generous

hug

authority

woman

holiday

tolerant

comforting

toddler

