

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

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

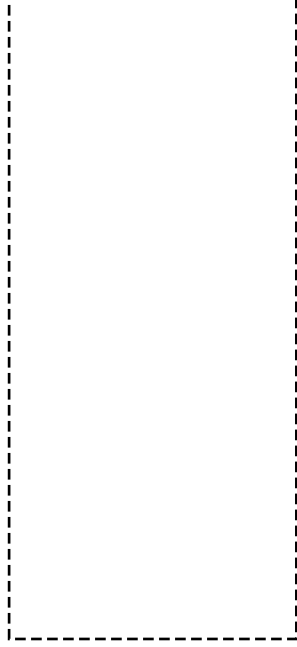
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr  
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office July 30



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# THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2025

St. Luke's  
**Echo**

1905 - 2025

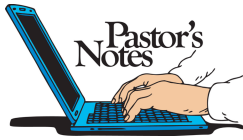


August Worship Services will  
be held at St. Luke's Lutheran,  
2315 I Street



Grow, Love, Serve

Connect with us on the web: [graceluth.com](http://graceluth.com)  
[stlukesomaha.org](http://stlukesomaha.org)



*A couple weeks ago, in one of my devotional readings from the Center for Action and Contemplation, individuals reflected on the story of Jonah and its connection to circumstances in our lives. Here is one of the reflections that spoke to me.*

*Author Debie Thomas considers how Jonah's story challenges our notions of God's mercy:*

Following his preposterous marine adventure, Jonah grudgingly obeys God's instructions and warns the people of Nineveh that their wickedness is about to be punished. But then the impossible happens.

The Ninevites listen to Jonah's warning, take it seriously, and repent. And God, seeing their penitence, changes God's mind and shows them mercy. In other words, Jonah preaches a sermon, and his congregation responds to it!... You'd think that Jonah would be thrilled. But no. He's furious, and he tells God so.

*After hearing Jonah's complaints, God asks, "What right do you have to get angry?" (Jonah 4:9). Thomas continues:*

To Jonah, then, God's question is a ridiculous one. *Of course* he has a right to be angry. Isn't it right to be angry that God's mercy extends to killers? Isn't it right to be angry when people who break the rules don't get the comeuppance they deserve? Isn't it right to be angry about a grace so reckless and wasteful that it challenges our most cherished assumptions about justice?

God doesn't scold Jonah for his anger. Instead, God engages it with compassion. God even goads it in a playful attempt to broaden Jonah's horizons. God wants the grumpy preacher to see the Ninevites as God sees them. For while the Assyrians are everything Jonah believes them to be—violent, depraved, and wicked—they are also more.... They're human beings made in God's image, but they're lost and broken. What they *deserve* is neither here nor there. What they *need* is compassion....

*Continued....*

God challenges Jonah to consider the hard truth that even his worst enemies are God's beloved children.... Should God not care for God's own? Is it right for Jonah to be angry? The story wisely ends with these questions unanswered. We're left with Jonah still sulking....

All too often, we are also left to wrestle with the scandalous goodness of God, a goodness that calls us to become instruments of grace even to those who offend us most deeply. God's goodness gently probes beneath our pieties and asks why we often prefer vindication to rehabilitation—prison cells and death sentences to hospitality and compassion. It exposes our smallness and stinginess, our reluctance to embrace the radical kinship God calls us to embrace. Why do we grab at the second chances God gives us, even as we deny those second chances to others? God's goodness dares us to do the braver and riskier thing: to hold out for the hearts of those who belong to God, whether we like them or not.

Do we have a right to be angry? God knows that the only way to answer this question, and so many others like it, is to wrestle it to the ground. God meets us in the ring, openhanded, willing, forbearing. God's hand rests on us in love, even as we prepare to attack. God's patient love enfolds us, absorbing our anger into God's all-sufficient self.

I trust God will meet us in whatever ring we have created and will extend love.

Pr. Laaker

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Pastor Laaker would like to meet with parents and young people interested in participating in confirmation instruction. Let's meet after worship on Sunday, August 10 at St. Luke's. We will see if we can choose a day and time for our class.



**Our New  
Confirmation  
Students**



### 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

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### Grace / St. Luke's Lutheran Transition Team Notes - July 15, 2025

The meeting opened at 5:31 p.m. with a gathering of prayers for individuals, communities, summer travel, all the inhumanity going on in this country, and for the victims recovering from both floods and wildfires. We continue to pray for the many individuals struggling with fear and isolation taking place in our community,

Devotions were shared from the Daily Texts.

From the "I Am A Follower" book – discussions were shared around a number of questions, Are you followable? Do you have a way about you that is different from the surrounding culture? Do we have a way that is patterned after *the* Way? Are we being and doing *the* Way? We could do better with sharing personal inspirational stories with one another. Please read pages 86-104 for next month.

Financial Secretary and Treasurer reports were received.  
 Did not work on the Readiness Inventory.

#### Shared future considerations:

Conversations were brought forward during Mary's Circle to help awareness of the progression in the Transition. Conversation continued with financial needs, with two locations to manage. Thoughts seemed to gravitate toward Grace as church location, and St Luke's as a place of outreach. What groups, organizations might be interested in this space? How could we continue? How could we continue our outreach and expand it!?

*Continued...*

#### Reports:

##### Ministry Sites

The AC unit at St. Luke's has been repaired.  
 The building exhaust fan at Grace needs repair.  
 Sprinkler systems at both locations have not been needed this year, we have had sufficient rain.  
 Two lights above the Altar at Grace need some repair.

Grow – Would a Bible Study in the fall be something to offer?  
 Confirmation classes will begin once again in the fall.

Love – OTOC Immigration and Refugee Chair spoke to Metro Urban Clergy.

Serve – To date 35 boxes of Cereal have been gathered for the Loaves and Fishes pantry. Think of programs to utilize through the Immanuel Vision Grant. Reading programs will continue at Liberty and Spring Lake this school year. Crossroads Prison Ministry will be at Grace on August 24. Youth group from First Lutheran Church in North Platte will be staying at St. Luke's July 20-22, they are in town for a mission trip and helping with Open Door Mission. Nancy and friends will provide breakfast on the 22nd before they return home.

Announcements: Dolores Castro's funeral will be Monday, July 21 at 10:00 am, at Westlawn.

Meeting was closed in prayer at 7:00 p.m.

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Dear Grace Endowment Board,



I pray you all are doing well and enjoying summer! I want to express my extreme thanks for your \$5,000 to our Refugee Programs! This gift helped provide the needed financial assistance our clients needed during these uncertain times!

Thank you again and we are honored by your support and partnership!

God Bless,  
 Jens Acamo, Director of Development Church Relations  
 Lutheran Family Services



*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 Dolores Castro



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, Grace and St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
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 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  
Richard Krambeck - Trinity Villiage, Papillion  
Dee Nielsen - Peyton, CO  
Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills  
Marilyn Van Ormer - Home



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 Jean, Miriam, Rod, and Robin for sharing your music ministry with us and providing such beautiful music during worship services.

Thank you Donna, Ron, and Brenda for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.

Thank you Deb, Theresa, Sara and Brenda for participating in the readings during worship services in July.

Thank you Greg, Janet and Ron for your weekly dedication for greeting people at the door, entering the sanctuary, and ushering during worship service.

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

Thank you Janet, Rose Marie, Connie and Bob 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!

Thank you to all who donated breakfast items for the Youth Group from First Evangelical Lutheran Church in North Platte. 4 Adults and 11 Youth were in Omaha on a mission trip helping Open Door Mission. The group camped out at St. Luke's from July 20 thru 22. A delicious breakfast was served on the 22nd before their return trip home.



**WE Belong  
to GOD  
Everyday**

**Stewardship**

**Rolf Jacobsen writes:** God cares at least as much about the money you don't give to charity as God does about the money you do, but the church's emphasis on tithing and giving "off the top" has led many congregations to believe the church and God are only concerned with that 2-10 percent. So, you can do whatever you want with the rest. I'm not sure that's the message we want to send.

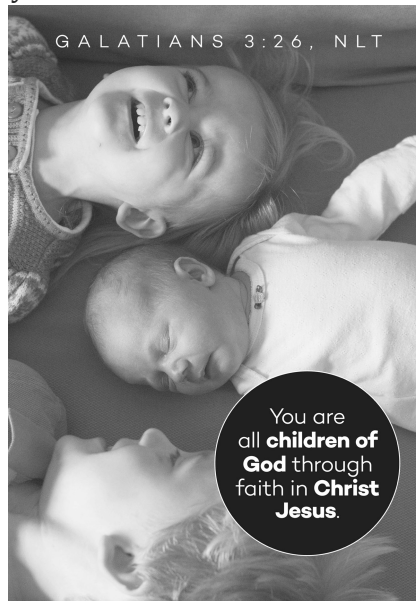
We belong to God, everything about us belongs to God — our bodies, our families, our time, our relationships, and our possessions. In light of that, the question we ought to be asking is: How do people who belong to God regard all they are and all they have?

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

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

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

Pr. Laaker



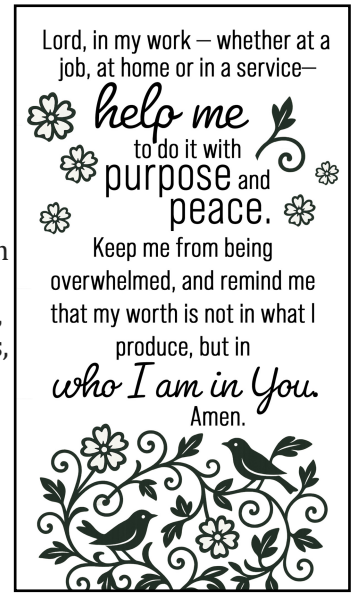
**BIBLE STUDY**

I was stuck. I didn't know what topic to address in next month's bible piece. I couldn't focus enough to choose a scripture verse. I had nothing. Zilch. Zip. Nada. Then an inspiration occurred to me. "Tell Brenda and Nancy that you aren't sending anything this month because you need a mini-vacation." The idea sounded good..."And", my mind continued, "You do need a little vacation. Don't be so rigid about sit-down prayer time every morning, Maybe don't read any scripture at all for a few days..." Oh, no! I know temptation when I hear it, though it usually includes donuts. But I need to pray every day. I need to read scripture every day. Don't we all? So, what to do? What to do?

I whispered, "Jesus, I trust you. Please show me a bible passage to write about for next month." I closed my eyes, spun around my Revised Standard Version of the Bible, opened it, and touched a page with one finger. ( I "cut" the Bible.) When I opened my eyes, I saw "... and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker." Is. 51:13a The smallest bit that made sense together was Isaiah 51:12-13 It reminds us that God is the One who comforts us, and asks who we are, anyway, to fear mortal men and their threats, forgetting God, who is always there for us. An expanded reading might be verses seven to sixteen, labelled 'Words of cheer to Zion'.

How like our ancestors we are! I, for one, have worried about changes coming from Washington, D.C. Who is going to be cut from Medicaid? Will Social Security continue to pay out the same amounts, and on time? Will Israel, supported by our president, find a way to kill all the Palestinians in Gaza? (Will any country take action to stop the Genocide?) And it gives me the willies to realize that masked men are kidnapping people off our streets and getting away with it, that Florida has opened up 'Alligator Alcatraz' as an immigration prison for people whose worst crime is coming to America without the proper permit, and that the Supreme Court is allowing the President to do things that we thought no U.S. president would ever do! As writing in last week's bulletin reminded us, it is so easy to forget God when our schedules change for the summer. However, we need God every minute of every day. Besides, God likes to hear from every one of us, just as we love to hear from our children and our grandchildren.

Sara welcomes discussion, by text or phone, at: (402) 686-1693.





St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, August 14, 2025 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Karen Chapman will have devotions, Deb Ludwig the lesson and Wanda Rhode will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome to come join in the learning, conversation and refreshments.

Throughout August we will be collecting items in support of the **Lutheran World Relief: Personal Care Kits**. Offering comfort and care to those who need it most.



Often, when natural disasters strike or when war drives families from their homes, our hearts ache with compassion, but we don't know how to help. Making Lutheran World Relief Kits is a simple, fun and tangible way to offer comfort to those suffering and express love to our neighbors in need. LWR Kits provide dignity and hope in the direst situations.

Each Personal Care Kit will include 2 Bars of soap, Bath towel (no bigger than 52" x 27"), adult size toothbrush in its original package, a comb and metal nail clippers. Personal Care Kits will be assembled on a date yet to be determined.

Whether you make one or a few Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits as a solo kit-maker, or hundreds as part of a kit assembly with your congregation, every kit you make will be cherished by the person who receives it in their time of need.

Lutheran World Relief Organization distributed guidelines to follow in our assembly process. All items that do not meet the LWR guidelines will be given to a local pantry where they will be distributed to those in need. Thank you to all who gave donations, time and monetary gifts, all are greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, please speak with Brenda.

The total cereal boxes donated for the Loaves and Fishes Pantry during the month of July was 123! Thank you to all who brought in donation and provided monetary funds!



## Life's Recipe

1 cup of good thoughts	2 cups of sacrifice for others
1 cup of kind deeds	2 cups of forgiveness
1 cup of consideration for others	2 cups of well-beaten faults

Mix these thoroughly and add tears of joy and sorrow and sympathy for others. Fold in 4 cups of prayer and faith to lighten other ingredients and raise texture to great height of Christian living. After pouring all this into your daily life, bake well with heat of human kindness. Serve with a smile.

*Shared by Greg and Janet Hula*

## Remembering Good Things by Kathleen Fessler

Since I am confined to stay, the rest home my domain,  
I let my mind take me away and past memories replay.

Just let me see a bright blue sky, puffy clouds as they drift by.  
Let me sit on soft green grass, feeling rays of sunshine pass.

Just let me hear a rippling creek, feel its coolness on my feet.  
On meadow flowers I could gaze, to lift my spirits and give God praise.

Just let me see a hare or deer or birds in skies so clear.  
Their singing would delight my ears and banish all my fears.

Just let me see a lovely tree. How pleasant it would be.  
I would rest beneath its shade, sipping homemade lemonade.

Just let me feel so grateful, to have lived a life so full.  
Each and every memory gives me comfort still.

*Shared by the Lutheran Journal, if you would like the magazine, copies can be found on the table located in the back of the sanctuary.*





## 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 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.

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



Path Assist, 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](http://www.path-assist.com/gethelp) or call 402-265-6551.



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? 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.



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.

Visit their website at: [tablegracecafe.com](http://tablegracecafe.com) for additional information and to learn the many different ways you can donate.

Help us Give more than a Meal.

Meals that Matter

The power of 77 resembles our drive to nourish hungry bodies and sould, and in honor of this, we are raising \$77,000 around the 3 key areas of Table Grace.

Our goal is to raise \$231,000 total for meals, food truck, and 10 day training scholarships.



# An August List of Holidays

BY PAUL LINTERN

I noticed recently that in our society, August is the only month without a holiday. I am appalled that the greeting card lobby has been so lax in this area. Wanting to do my part to assist the holiday decorations and party supplies industries, I make the following recommendations for August holidays.

- **August 1: August Day.** Children can get into swimsuits and dance around an August sprinkler pole, under streams of flowing water.

- **August 4: Dependents' Day.** Everyone who is declared as a dependent on a tax form uses the day to spend the deduction that is declared on them.

- **August 9: Richard Nixon Day.** The anniversary of his resignation, this would be opposite of Presidents' Day, in that children would have to leave their vacation and go to school on this day, in order to read the U.S. Constitution, to see if they can understand it any better than he did.

- **August 15: Tax Day.** A frivolous tribute to the tax of all kinds — *income, exercise, luxury, gasoline, thumb and carpet* — with a costume festival as the rousing conclusion of the day under the theme, "Come as your favorite sin tax." The Lone Star State would be the focus of the celebration, since the only sure things in life are "death and Texas."

- **The fourth Thursday in August: Thanksgiving Day.** A solemn, special family day which will center around a meal and the whole household giving thanks that football season is about to begin again.

- **August 25: Christmas Shopping Season Kickoff.** Buy your friends presents for this occasion, and be sure to send cards.

- **August 31: New Month's Eve.** For those who still need an excuse for a party.

You will enjoy Paul's daily Godpods by subscribing for free at: <https://merrychristians.substack.com>

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## FAITHFUL WORD SEARCH

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B U P U J A P O S T L E D S M U N W G M
T M J N U D H S A L V A T I O N C T S U
V S Y L O H H T I A F W A I O D H I B Y
M J I Y I Y S U O I G I L E R C E Q B T
K I M G P H I L O S O P H Y R H P C E N
Q N N N O Y E U Q S O M J U T N U T Y I
O B I S U L I W G T A E H O G B A Q E O
E F T S T C O N R S F C N U N T V R V N
U N T E Y R O T S C L O I B I L U U C A
U B L P C S Y E N G M D W D R T W O H T
P J G I T I C C K E E T E D P J N O R J
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E P C I L H I I I E Y C R M R Y Y G S W
L E Q A K S T N R P R C S E P N H O T I
I A R I L T E E A C S G G V F L L D I S
E C S A M S L P N Q A A Y U S O E M A H
V E M M R A T L A E T S K D W Q P K N H
E I C L L A U J E I D S D U D N I H D B
C I L O H T A C O J B U D D H I S T G W
O Q Q M D C A N O N W F E S T I V A L V
    
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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally & diagonally throughout the puzzle.

<b>WORDS</b>	CHURCH	HOLY	SACRIFICE
	CLERGY	ISLAMIC	SALVATION
ALTAR	CONGREGATION	JEWISH	SCIENTOLOGIST
ANOINT	ENLIGHTENED	MEDITATE	SCRIPTURE
APOSTLE	FAITH	MINISTRY	SECULAR
BELIEVE	FESTIVAL	MONOTHEISM	SIKH
BUDDHIST	GNOSTIC	MOSQUE	SIN
CANON	GOD	PEACE	TEMPLE
CATHOLIC	GUIDELINES	PHILOSOPHY	
CHRISTIAN	HINDU	RELIGIOUS	

### One-Liners

The person who invented knock-knock jokes should get a no-bell prize.

The word "queue" is ironic. It's just a Q with a bunch of silent letters waiting in line.

Dinosaurs didn't read. Now they are extinct. Thank goodness the Thesaurus survived!