

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
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DECEMBER SUNDAY EVENTS
9:30 am. Worship Service
St. Luke's Lutheran, 2315 "I" Street

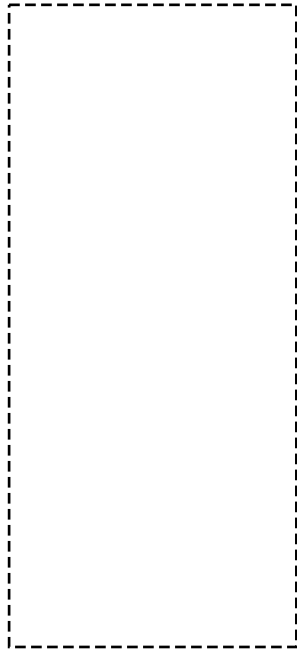
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2025



St. Luke's Echo

1905 - 2025

december

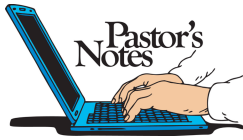


December Worship Services
will be held at St. Luke's
Lutheran, 2315 I Street



Grow, Love, Serve

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



Advent begins. Our friends at Kairos and FOSNA (Friends of Sabeel North America: A Christian Voice for Palestine) share these words as we begin our observance of Advent.

“We live in a time of monsters. The story and tradition of Advent reminds us that it is also a time of powerful expectation. A time when we see the signs of something new breaking through. The new world struggles to be born within and through the final violent thrashings of a monstrous system, “The rage of Herod is the last gasp of the older order and the desperate attempt to hold on to the old way.” (Walter Bruggeman, *Prophetic Imagination*, 82). The old way functions only through violence and domination, dehumanization of those who threaten its domination or aren’t contributing to its wealth. It is a system that exploits and destroys the land and cries “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” This time of struggle and expectation mirrors the experience of the early Jesus community as they faced down the overwhelming power and resources of the Roman Empire. The Advent story was intended to affirm a new way, realized in the lives and struggles of the poor and dispossessed, that seeks peace through justice, that yearns for a world of abundance where all can thrive and live in right relationship.”

May we together cry out and make known the anguish of our people and declare our expectation of and amazement at a new world being born in and through the struggles of the poor.

May your Advent observances and practices bring you closer to those whose life has been put in peril. At the same, please know that the one born among us is the bringer of true peace, love and resurrection life.

Our Christmas Eve service will be at 4:30 pm at St. Luke’s Lutheran.

Pastor Laaker

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

Stewardship

we say
Yes!

“We Say Yes! Our fall stewardship emphasis is in its last phase. We look forward to the ways God is inviting you to respond for the new year.

One of the ways to acknowledge the way God’s yes has been evident in this shared ministry is to share some of the ways “We have said Yes” over this past year.

- Our weekly pantry has received over \$132,000 worth of food that has been distributed to persons in need. Plus, the food we receive from Whole Foods.
- Partnered with Lutheran Family Service providing household cleaning supplies.
- Donated a gift basket for the OTOC Celebrating Communities silent auction.
- Provided the supplies to assemble 91 Lutheran World Relief Personal Care Kits.
- Created gift bags for residents of Nebraska Nursing Home.
- Donated over 975 non-perishable food items for the Thrivent Food Shelf.
- Provided support for education and ministry efforts from our Endowment Funds totaling over \$102,050.
- Regular giving to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal totaling over \$2,830.
- Regular giving to support the ongoing ministry efforts of our congregations.

By living the way of the cross, we do not gain heaven or earn God’s favor. We have already been given those things. We do not gain status or achieve blessings. God gives status and blessings as God chooses. We live God’s way, accountable for our time and talents and treasures, because we have said “Yes” to God in Christ – “Yes” by the power of the Spirit. We live that “Yes” as we daily renew our baptismal promise and seek to be who God is calling us to be in the world.

THANK YOU!





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

Grace / St. Luke's Lutheran Transition Team Notes - November 11, 2025

The meeting opened at 5:30 p.m. with a gathering of prayers for individuals and communities. Some personal requests, ongoing struggles in the world and folks dealing with fear and uncertainty.

Devotions were shared from the Daily Texts.

From the "I Am A Follower" book – discussions were shared around the main question: Where has Jesus' driver's license taken you in ministry? **Please continue to reflect.** Read pages 161-173 for next month.

Financial Secretary and Treasurer reports were received and accepted.

Shared future considerations:

Transition team discussed suggested new names. The plan is to reduce the list to 2-4 options at the next meeting.

Reports:

Ministry Sites - new door sweep, small items - nothing large outstanding. Started discussions around the double gas & double water meters at St. Lukes.

Grow –

1. Continuing Bible Study on the book of Acts.
2. Continuing Fall Stewardship Emphasis - We Say Yes!
 Planned giving cards coming in the next week or so.

Continued...

Love –

1. Let's think about ways to recognize pantry volunteers - supplies, cards, recognition during service. Tables? Carts? Keep thinking!
2. God's Work Our Hands – delivery of the prepared items went well, and residents were very appreciative. Next ideas?
3. Personal Care Kits - 91 kits sent, highest ever!
4. Thrivent Food Shelf - Currently over 900 items donated, Thrivent will match with \$500.

Serve –

1. Submitted: Immanuel Vision Grant - Food for our Neighbors in Need. Requested \$13,500 for San Andres pantry. Rice, beans, sugar, flour, canned tuna, canned chicken, oil. They feed 100-120 people every week.

Announcements

Potluck brunch on Sunday, November 16.
 OTOC Issues Conference on Sunday November 16.
 Thanksgiving Eve will be at St Matthews Lutheran, 6:30 pm.
 Crossroads Prison Ministry - tentative April 19 and August 16.
 Christmas Eve Service 4:30 pm at St Lukes

Meeting was closed in prayer at 6:57 p.m.

PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS PEACE LOVE HOPE JESUS

Christmas Eve Services

Come! Let Us Adore Him!



Wednesday, December 24th
4:30 pm at St. Luke's
2315 "I" Street

Come and celebrate the Joy and Wonder of Christmas through listening to Scripture readings and Pastor's Message while we worship together and sing some of our favorite Christmas Hymns. In keeping with tradition, we will end our Christmas Eve Service by singing Silent Night by candlelight.

Prayer LIST

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
Richard Krambeck
Carolyn Matson
Pam Reents
Marilyn Van Ormer
The family of Melvin Wipperling



Vicki Cox
Pr. Edgar Jimenez
Samuel Mantzaris
Ed Nodean
Ken Sukraw



Pray for wisdom for your Church Transition Team at St. Luke's and Grace Lutheran. 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 Yehiel Curry, 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.

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
Richard Krambeck - Trinity Villiage, Papillion
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

Ways you can SERVE

Thank you Mary for your weekly dedication running the recording equipment every Sunday during worship service.

Thank you Pastor Laaker for leading the Bible Study in November. Learning about the book of Acts has been very interesting and we have all learned new history!

Thank you Jean, 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 Theresa, Sara Pahl, Brenda and Connie for participating in the readings during worship services in November.

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 Bob, Frank and Dan for your weekly dedication for greeting everyone who enters both the entryway and sanctuary before worship services, ushering during worship service and communion assistant.

Thank you Janet, Rose Marie, John, Donna, Ron, 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!





Sunday, January 25, 2026
Luther Memorial Lutheran Church
 1031 Sunset Trail, Omaha



Chili Cook-Off & Silent Auction
4:30 p.m.

Holden Evening Prayer with Grand Choir
6:00 p.m.



Come experience the warmth found when gathered together for worship, music, faith, and food. When it's cold and dark.... we sing! Lifting our voices together to illuminate hope for all. Everyone is welcome. Free will offering to Omaha Campus Ministry is encouraged.



Mary's

St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and a Christmas Potluck Party. Rose Marie will have devotions. Everyone is welcome!



BIBLE STUDY

Let's look today at Psalm 73, not one that people typically choose for meditation or writing, but full of truth, and today it struck me. First, our common backstory: Faith tells us that God chose each of us, at Baptism, to bring us into the beloved community, indwelled us as the Spirit of Jesus, and invited us to join in the astonishing work of creation. (See Psalm 8.) We are to nurture all that lives and tell the story of God's Love. We owe eternal gratitude and every allegiance to Our Creator.

But how do we live this gracious gift, and what is our attitude now? So asks Psalm 73. In the midst of a world fractured by many kinds of violence, seeing leaders who flagrantly ignore the laws of God, nature, and nation, I can be bitter and resentful. (See verse 21.) Some leaders deliberately make others hungry, I think, while throwing lavish parties for their friends. It ain't fair! They drive struggling families out of their homes, yet continually build bigger and fancier mansions for themselves. They jet off to summits around the world, then write op-ed pieces in the Sunday newspaper here at home, to blame others for the ills we encounter. And here I am, stretching to make donations and ease some of the troubles they cause. And don't even get me started on those ICE detentions! So I seethe. Grrr! But that is their story, not mine, as C.S.Lewis so wisely points out in the first volume of his wonderful Narnia stories. I need to focus on living my story, not theirs.

What if God called me to help build a home for all the people who have ever lived, and for all those yet to come? I could exhaust myself from weeks, months, even years of labor, and my contribution would be as one tiny grain of sand in the foundation of that amazing structure! Is it worth it? Or think of a farmer who toils mightily in heat and cold for a lifetime, constantly risking the loss of land and fortune, all to add a single sprig of parsley to the magnificent banquet that God prepares for us all. Why even try? I could multiply examples, but the answers would be the same. Yes, it is worth it. We can try because God loves us, loves us, loves us. (See verses 23 and following.) Who would want to be with anyone else? Why would we not trust, not love in return One who has given us so much, and who stays with us through it all?

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





27416 Ranch Road
Ashland, NE 68003

Greetings, partners in ministry! We are grateful to have had the opportunity to share the love of Christ and discuss the unexpected ways God appears in our lives!

We all know how faith comes alive when we step outside of our day-to-day routines and explore faith conversations with our peers at camp. We have listed opportunities to get back to camp this winter.

UFO (Unfinished Objects) Retreat; December 5-8. These retreats are for crafters of any kind. Bring your own projects and use this time away to get caught up or do new projects! It's a great time to meet new friends, learn new skills, and be inspired by others' creativity. Come stay in a beautiful place with high-comfort facilities and great food – you'll leave refreshed and ready to start other project.

For more information, contact Jessica, our Adult Programs Specialist, at JWeltz@NLOM.org or 402-944-2544.

The High School Retreat; January 16-18. High School Retreat is a great opportunity to hit the pause button on a busy winter schedule, take time to relax, explore, get creative, and connect with both new and old friends. During Bible study, we will dive back into last summer's theme, "Plot Twist."

For questions and program cost checks, please contact Laura, Youth Programs Specialist at LStalder@NLOM.org or call 402-944-2544.

Early Bird Savings! Register by January 31, 2026 to receive a \$50 discount to all full week sessions at Camp Carol Joy Holling. The first 300 campers will receive a CJH Camp beach towel! Flyers can be found on the back table in the sanctuary.

Ready to keep Faith Alive? Our Summer Staff is comprised of go-getters who are ready to Learn - Grow - Lead. No two days are the same, every day is a new adventure. One moment you're hiking through mud, the next you're leading campers in games and campfire songs. Build your skills, supportive community, and more at Carol Joy Holling Camp this summer. Apply today at NLOM.org/smt.



Giving Tuesday, December 2, 2025, is powered by SHARE Omaha



SHARE Omaha offers the giving public opportunities to connect with metro nonprofits through donations, volunteering and shopping wish lists. We make it easy to find local nonprofits and engage with them how you choose. Our open and inclusive platform amplifies the needs of the entire nonprofit community giving all organizations a chance to be seen and heard regardless of size, cause or budget. We believe this technology will engage a new audience and foster the donors who will sustain and advance the metro's philanthropic future.

We offer simple ways for neighbors, nonprofits and businesses to come together through good to support our local community.

Go to shareomaha.org to select from over 250 non profit organizations and ways you can help.

**GIVE THANKS
AND GIVE BACK**

November food shelf challenge
GENEROSITY STARTS HERE!

With an increased need for food security, the Thrivent Member Network - Nebraska Region is hosting a Fall Food Shelf Challenge.



Together, our collection totalled 951 non-perishable food items! Thrivent Member Network - Nebraska Region will be sending a Generosity Multiplier Gift of \$500 to the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry.

Thank you to everyone who donated can goods and financial aid to their shopper!

Do you know a family in need of diapers and experiencing financial needs? The church office has flyers available upon request for you to share with anyone who is facing this specific need. The flyer is sponsored by nebraskadiaperbank.org



Changing Diapers Changing Lives



Loaves and Fishes Pantry

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

**Pantry is Open Every Monday morning 10:00 - 11:00 am
~ 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.

Kountze Lutheran Memorial Church
2650 Farnam Street
402-341-7761

Candlelight Carol Service
Saturday, December 13
Prelude 4:30 PM
Service 5:00 - 6:00 PM

Please join us as we celebrate the seasons of Advent and Christmas! The annual Candlelight Carol Service has become a beloved tradition at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church. We hope that you, your family, and friends can join us for this special service of Sacred Scripture, Communion, Carols, Choral Anthems, Handbell Music, Brass and String Quartets, Organ, Piano, Flute, and more.

Join us for this special evening of hope, joy, and fellowship!



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.

Giving Tuesday, December 2, 2025
Goal is \$65,000 for Meals that Matter



Donation Impact:

A \$1,000 donation will empower Table Grace to invest in One Job Experience Trainee through to graduation and assist in finding them employment.

A \$500 donation will empower Table Grace to bless a community with a Food Truck experience.

A \$250 donation will empower Table Grace to serve 25 meals that matter for people who volunteer for their meal at the cafe.

A \$20 donation will empower Table Grace to serve 2 meals that matter for people who volunteer for their meals at the cafe.

If you can't make it in, you can scan the QR code to make a donation. Or you can mail one to:

Table Grace
1617 Farnam Street
PO Box 38
Omaha, NE 68101

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





"Those wise men brought gifts. That's where Santa Claus got the idea."

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
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The Lord's Laughter - Christmas Edition

What happened to the man who stole an Advent Calendar?
He got 25 days!

How did Joseph and Mary weigh baby Jesus at birth?
They had a weigh in the manger.

What is a vegan's favorite Christmas song?
Soy to the World!

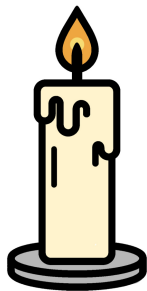
Why did the Christmas tree go to the dentist?
It needed a root canal!

Why did Rudolph have to attend summer school?
Because he went down in history.

How do Christmas trees get their email?
They log-on.

What do grapes sing at Christmas?
'Tis the season to be jelly.

What did the Christmas tree do after its bank closed?
It started his own branch.



Nativity Word Scramble

1. HAISMES _____
2. RBTIH _____
3. SEHPOJ _____
4. BAYB _____
5. HYRMR _____
6. IGVRIN _____
7. GKIN _____
8. PDSRSHEEH _____
9. AENRGM _____
10. FKANCESEIRNN _____
11. TEABSL _____
12. EUSSJ _____
13. SEEWIMN _____
14. SRTAHIMSC _____
15. DOLG _____
16. DOHER _____
17. MRAY _____
18. AECEP _____
19. OYKEDN _____
20. TRHNAZEA _____
21. EEHLHTEMB _____
22. ASRT _____
23. ALGEN _____
24. OPRWHSI _____



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