

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

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

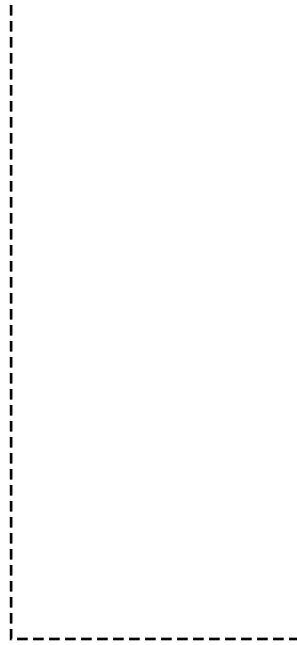
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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THE GRACE MESSENGER

1889 - 2026

St. Luke's
Echo

1905 - 2026



August Worship Services will
be held at Grace Lutheran,
1326 South 26th Street



Worship
Together

Grow, Love, Serve

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



On Sunday, July 19, I began my sermon with these words. Last week Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a Sower scattering seed with reckless abundance. This week Jesus shifts the image from the generosity of the Sower to the patience of the landowner. The good seed has taken root, but it is not alone. An enemy has sown weeds among the wheat, and now both grow together until the harvest.

This parable will not answer every question we might ask about the origin of evil nor is it trying to explain why there are good and bad things in the world. Instead, it asks: How are the people of God to live in a world where good and evil remain tangled together?

In a Daily Devotion, this thought was shared. *Writing to a friend, the spiritual writer and Catholic priest Henri Nouwen (1932–1996) reflects on how we share our joy of being God’s beloved with others:*

“The characteristic of the blessed ones is that, wherever they go, they always speak words of blessing. It is remarkable how easy it is to bless others, to speak good things to and about them, to call forth their beauty and truth, when you yourself are in touch with your own blessedness. The blessed one always blesses. And people want to be blessed! This is so apparent wherever you go. No one is brought to life through curses, gossip, accusations, or blaming. There is so much of that taking place around us all the time. And it calls forth only darkness, destruction, and death. As the “blessed ones,” we can walk through this world and offer blessings. It doesn’t require much effort. It flows naturally from our hearts. When we hear within ourselves the voice calling us by name and blessing us, the darkness no longer distracts us. The voice that calls us the Beloved will give us words to bless others and reveal to them that they are no less blessed than we.

“You live in New York. I live in Toronto. As you walk down Columbus Avenue and I down Yonge Street, we can have no illusions about the darkness. The loneliness, the homelessness, and the addictedness of people are all too visible. Yet all of these people yearn for a blessing. That blessing can be given only by those who have heard it themselves.... We are chosen and blessed. When we have truly owned this, have said “Yes” to it, then we can face our own and others’ brokenness with open eyes.”

Pastor Laaker



2026 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 - July 14, 2026

The meeting opened at 5:30 p.m. with a gathering of prayers for individuals and communities. All members present. Prayer for a member and her dialysis needs. Prayers for the immigrant families of Joan Sebastian, and Lorenzo. Prayer for all of those struggling with the heat, here and around the world. Continued prayers for peace in the Middle East. Prayer for a member’s great nephew struggling with ongoing pain management. Prayer for families moving. Celebration for a grandson’s engagement. Prayer for Pastor’s upcoming surgery.

Devotions were shared from the Daily Texts.

The conclusion of the “I Am A Follower” book – Discussion centered on how do we see ourselves playing the role of being the Follower that Jesus wants us to be? How do we engage with others and continue this script? Are we bringing others up, or are we out there for ourselves? Are we working together and wanting to truly see changes within and around us? **Task - find one inspirational piece from the book and share a couple of reasons.**

Minutes were received & accepted as printed.

Financial Secretary, and Treasurer reports were received and accepted through motions.

Continued...

Shared future considerations:

A bid for repair of the fence has been received. It will be sent to State Farm Insurance soon.
General Fire has been bought by Summit, and they will work to get Grace's fire alarm panel working.
Consideration for officially connecting with Reconciling Works, only 3 current local churches have officially done this.
Ongoing banking concerns - Victory Funds will need to be reset.
Families in Action / Interfaith Health meeting again at St. Luke's, 3 days per week.

Reports:

Grow – Bible Study using the Gospel of Matthew or 1 Corinthians.

Love – OTOC events coming up; Medical debt & Accountability Session.
School Reading Programs will be continuing with Liberty & Spring Lake Schools.
Immanuel Vision Grant Ideas?

Serve – Crossroads Community – August.
CIRA Event Back to School Drive.
God's Work Our Hands; blankets, care kits, snack kits - Stephens Center & YES.
Loaves & Fishes - Whole Foods annual report.
Thrivent Choice Dollars changes underway.
Habitat Clean Up Day on July 18 on South 20th Street.

Announcements

Pastor Laaker will have hernia surgery on July 21.

Meeting was closed in prayer at 7:02 p.m.

Summer Time Extra!

Through the end of August, Interfaith Health will be holding exercise classes and children programs each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Art Classes are for anyone between the ages of 1 - 99! Please check out the calendar for dates and times!



Stewardship

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4, NRSV)

What are some things in your context to celebrate and give thanks for? **What stories of ministry in action can be celebrated in your midst?** Stewardship is about telling the stories of ministry, giving thanks, and inviting or asking people to join and/or continue to be a part of that ministry. Today you can lift up the message to “keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen” and been called to in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:9, NRSV).

Pr. Laaker



**Center for Immigrant
and Refugee Advancement**

**4223 Center Street
402-898-1349**

CIRA Back to School -Donation Drive

This fall, CIRA is preparing to support approximately 400 children in our unaccompanied minors and refugee family programs as they get ready to start the new school year. Many of these children do not have the essential supplies they need to begin the school year. One way to support this back-to-school season is by collecting school supplies.

Items in need include:

Backpacks	Index Cards	Binders
Pocket folders	Geometry sets	Rulers
Pencils	Crayons	Colored Pencils
Loose leaf paper	Erasers	Glue Sticks
Calculators	Pens	Scissors
Highlighters	Pencil cases	

There is a quick deadline! Donated items are needed by next **Sunday August 9th!** A Huge Thank You to all who are able to make any size donation for this empowering Back to School Drive; to insure each child will have the essential items for a successful school year.



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
Pr. Edgar Jimenez
Carolyn Matson
Pam Reents
Marilyn Van Ormer



Vicki Cox
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 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
Charlotte Palczynski - Home
Marilyn Van Ormer - Pathfinder Senior Living, Fremont



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

Thank you Karen, for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.

Thank you Shirley, Karen, Frank and Janice for participating in the readings during worship services in July.

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

Thank you Bob, Frank, Dan, and Steve 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 Tommy, Jady and Jackson for acolyting during worship services in July. It is greatly appreciated.

Thank you Rose Marie, Connie, Bob, Greg, Donna, Ron and Andrea 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 all who enter.

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!



BIBLE STUDY Last month our bible study focused on the need to wait with hope and patience for God's reign, and on how hard that can be. This month's reading, Romans 8:28-39, pulls us farther along that path. This is important, because faith 'can' wait, but it 'must' act. We must act. What is Paul's assurance to us in the very first verse of the reading? Yes, that God brings good out of everything for those living a life of faith in response to God's call. And, Paul tells us, we are headed for glory, in and with Christ. We need that assurance because:

1. The world won't provide it, and
2. (verses 35-37) Look at the list of things that we may face! trouble, worry, persecution, no food, no clothes, threats, even physical attack! (In truth, some of you have already faced some of these, and you are here, even so.)

Now, I urge you to go back and look again at the beginning of verse 35. "Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ." This is the essential truth that we must get our teeth into, that we must hang onto, if we are to act in faith. The rest of the reading is a hymn of praise, repeating this truth in an exultant cry of triumph. Beautiful, but when the hymn is sung and the worship is done, we still need to live the life.

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



St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, August 13, 2026 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Brenda Spahr will have devotions, Karen Chapman will give the lesson and Janet Hula will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome to come join in the learning, conversation and refreshments.

Mary's



St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Endowment Fund Scholarship Program
For the 2026-2027 School Year

The Endowment Fund's Scholarship Program assists in achieving educational goals by providing scholarships. If you will be attending college during the 2026-2027 school year, now is the time to apply!

In an email to stlukes@stlukesomaha.org please provide the following information:

1. Your Name
2. University, College, Conservatory, or other institution you will be attending
3. Evidence that you have been accepted for enrollment by that school (i.e. upload a picture of your acceptance letter, or college schedule)
4. What your degree or study program you are pursuing
5. Short paragraph about your previous schooling (previous college year or senior year of high school year)

Please send your email by August 16, 2026. We look forward to hearing from you!

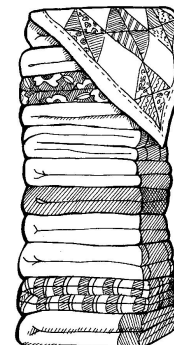


God's Work - Our Hands
Sunday, September 20, 2026



We will be collecting items to create tie blankets, care kits and snack kits that will benefit both the Stephens Center and YES (Youth Emergency Services).

We will create the tie blankets together following worship services the first couple of weeks in September. If you have any questions, please speak with a Transition Team member. Please continue to watch the bulletin for additional information.



Save the Date:
Sunday, September 20th
First United Methodist Church
7020 Cass Street
2:00 - 4:00 pm



Candidate Accountability Session

Scan the QR Code or find the link to RSVP
<https://bit.ly/4uVt7Gj>

Candidate Accountability Session is a platform for OTOC to keep each candidate accountable for each issue they agree to support in front of all institutions present on September 20th.

This is not a platform for the candidates. Questions for the candidates have been created by a panel of OTOC leaders. This is a controlled situation to hear from each candidate as they respond to the issues on OTOC's top concerns.

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) teaches people to become effective leaders, explore their legitimate interests, do solid research, engage in sometimes tough, but always respectful public discourse, hold elected officials accountable and create positive change through collective action. Through the practice of these skills, people build relationships of trust and, by acting collaboratively, become part of solving their own problems rather than expecting someone else to take care of them

Individuals interested in learning more about the Candidate Accountability Session scheduled on Sunday, September 20th, please feel free to speak with Brenda Spahr.

Continuing the journey of combining our congregations, a new non-pictorial directory will be available by the end of summer for individuals who are currently active in worshipping and/or contributing. Contact information will be needed from all who would like to be included in the directory. You can help make this project a success by filling out your form with your contact information; name, address, phone number and email address. If you have not received your information form, please speak with Brenda Spahr. Please watch the weekly bulletin and monthly newsletter for additional information!



We're Updating
Our Church Directory



27416 Ranch Road
Ashland, NE 68003



August 11th & 12th and September 8th & 9th ~ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Jay Novicki day camps are an opportunity for participants (21 and older) with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities to enjoy a taste of camp. Each half-day session includes worship, an inclusive activity, and lunch. Every month has a new theme, and campers are encouraged to return month after month!

All activities are designed to be inclusive of campers at all ability levels. Activities may include:

- Adaptive archery
- Creative arts
- Carnival games
- Fishing
- Outdoor education

Staff and volunteers lead programming at a ratio of approximately 2:1. Campers' needs are a top priority.

Multiple day camps are offered each month, and campers are encouraged to choose just one session per month. Registration closes one week prior to the event.

Those needing assistance with tasks of daily living (e.g. eating, showering or using the restroom) must bring an assistant/aide. Please list the specific needs of the participant on the registration form or attach a note with details.

While our camp is not 100% handicap accessible, we make all possible accommodations for campers. We're happy to discuss your individual needs.

For questions, call our Adult Program Specialist, Callee, at 402-944-2544.

Registration is due one week prior to the event. You can register online, by mail, or by calling our Program Specialist, Callee, at 402-944-2544. The cost is just \$20 per camper; a generous donor has subsidized much of the Jay Novicki program.



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, paper grocery sacks, egg cartons and the small berry or cherry tomato containers!** 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.

Well Water Jar Campaign

The ELCA encourages congregations and individuals to support access to safe, clean water as a vital expression of our faith and love for neighbor. Through initiatives like ELCA World Hunger and partnerships with local and global organizations, Lutherans help build wells and provide water purification, improving health and opportunity for communities in need. This work reflects our call to steward God's creation and serve others, remembering that water is both a gift and a symbol of new life in Christ.



Please look for the Water Campaign Jar at the back of the sanctuary to place your donation, thank you!



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

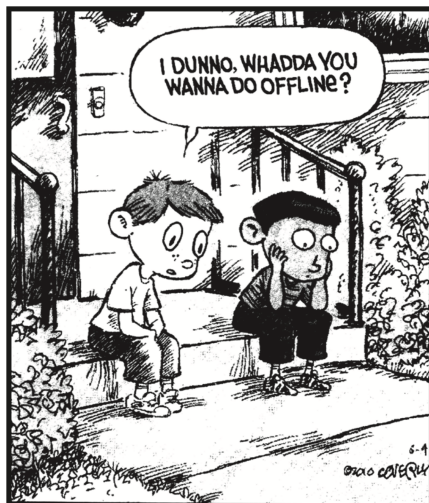
TABLE GRACE CAFE
Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

We are truly grateful for your faithful donations in 2025! What an incredible year! Table Grace offers a safe haven for people who are hungry, lonely, isolated and in need of dignity and community.

Gospel Brunch! New 2026! Table Grace is offering a Gospel brunch once per month on Sundays! August 9th will be our next Gospel Brunch, come by between 10:00 am - 2:00 pm for delicious food, Gospel music, and a community of faith filled with grace.

PATH ASSIST

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 or call 402-265-6551.



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Aging "I" - Liners

I finally have my head together, now my body is falling apart.

I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it,

These days I spend a lot of time thinking about the hereafter. I go somewhere to get something and then wonder what I'm here after.

I have reached the age when my obituary will not contain the word "untimely."

If I had known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself.

When I am finally holding all the cards, why does everyone decide to play chess.

Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.

Nice to be here? At my age, it's nice to be anywhere. ~ George Burns

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Encouragement

I	L	P	R	O	F	E	S	S	J	I	W	H	I	H	J	K	Z	H
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CHILDREN
CHOSEN
COMPASSION
CONSCIENCE
CONSUMED
COURAGEOUS
DWELL
FAITHFULNESS
GAINS

GLORY
GUARD
HEART
HOLY
IMAGE
KNOWLEDGE
KNOWN
LAVISHED
OVERFLOW

PRIESTHOOD
PROFESS
PURIFY
RECEIVE
REFLECTION
SURPASSING



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