

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

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

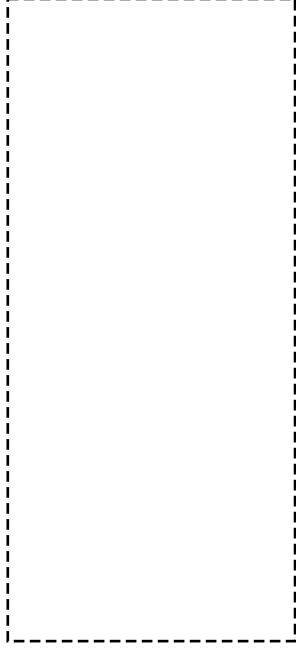
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr
Sexton - Alma Lopez

Delivered to the Post Office June 25



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St. Luke's
Echo

1905 - 2026

THE GRACE
MESSENGER

1889 - 2026



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



Worship
Together

Grow, Love, Serve

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



One of the Seminary professors at Luther Seminary, Steve Thomason, wrote the following as a reflection on the celebration of Independence Day.

“A Declaration of Interdependence | Reflections on Independence Day”

240+ years ago a group of British citizens in the colonies of New England became frustrated by unfair taxes. They tried to reason with the King of England, but were shut down. Eventually, this led to a revolution. The Continental Congress declared its independence from England on July 4th, 1776. A war ensued, and between 1776 and 1783 France and Spain joined the war against Britain. It is estimated that nearly 70,000 Americans died during that war. In 1783 the Treaty of Paris was signed and England granted independence to the United States of America.

Independence. It is such a powerful concept.

Let me tell you right now. I am very grateful that I was born in the United States. The US Constitution is definitely the best human system going. The first amendment protects our freedom. It says,

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

That is amazing, especially considering that every other government in the world was run by the tyranny of one person or an elite group.

I like my independence.

AND...

As I to grow deeper in the love of God and my horizons expand, I am continually exposed to the stories of so many people in the United States who don't experience the same kind of freedom and independence that my social location affords me.

As a pastor and professor of spiritual formation how can I reconcile this disparity?

The path of maturity for human development moves through three basic stages.

Dependence. An infant will die if left alone. A child is completely dependent upon a more mature human for survival. The child is not able —physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually—to survive and thrive.

Independence. The developing child must go through a process of weaning from the dependence phase. She must learn that she is now physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually able to encounter life as an individual and make choices without the supervision of those upon whom she depended as a child. Many ancient and pre-modern cultures had clear ceremonies of liminal space that served as rights of passage from childhood to adulthood. This is good and right, and often very painful for the family system. Modern, Western, Industrialized Societies have extended this liminal space of differentiation into an incredibly long process called **adolescence**.

Interdependence. While the process of learning independence is good and healthy, it is not the whole picture. The truth of the universe is that nothing exists completely alone and nothing has everything within itself to survive. All things are interdependent upon other things for survival. The mature human recognizes the truth of Genesis 3:18 when God said that it was not good for the human to be alone. We were created for community and we must learn to rely upon each other, offering our strengths and allowing other's strengths to complement our weaknesses.

The American Revolution was a necessary moment in the lives of the British colonists. The tyranny of the King of England was unjust. The Declaration of Independence was the beginning of the adolescent phase for those white, British colonists.

It was good.

AND, it is not God's dream for the world.

During the colonists' revolution, I wonder how God felt about their African slaves? I wonder how God felt about the indigenous people that were slowly being driven out of the land and/or murdered? I wonder how God felt about the fact that women and children and the poor had no rights.

The biblical witness declares that God stands with the oppressed of the world, calls them to speak truth to unjust power structures, and promises to be with them until all nations are blessed and **shalom** (actual peace) is the rule of the day.

Continued.....

Continued.....

This is a difficult, messy process.

Jesus called it the “Kingdom of God” or “The Commonwealth of the Heavens.”

Jesus modeled that kind of life for us and invites us to follow him into a messy, interdependent life where we remember God’s promise to Abraham that he (and we) are blessed to be a blessing to all nations.

As we grill our hot dogs, attend parades, and ooh and aah over fireworks this weekend, may we remember that God is calling us into a deeper life. May we, as American Citizens, strive to grow up and out of our adolescence and deepen in maturity and the love of God for all people.

May we join with Jesus in a Declaration of Interdependence.”

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 - June 9, 2026**

The meeting opened at 5:35 p.m. with a gathering of prayers for individuals and communities. Prayers of peace for the Nielsen family, for Rod for upcoming surgery, the family of Rich Clinger, for many out traveling with safe journeys. Prayers for John as he works through medical injections. Prayers for ending World struggles including war, food shortages, and all types of concerns.

Devotions were shared from the Daily Texts.

From the “I Am A Follower” book – Discussion centered on how we are meant to live. Are we living joyfully? Are we assertive, or ready to be followers? God gives us a mind to make our own decisions, but God is always available to guide and help us. Please continue to read, 257-260 for next month.

Continued...

Minutes were received & accepted as printed.

Financial Secretary, and Treasurer reports were received and accepted through a motion.

Shared future considerations:

A response from the Secretary of State regarding securing the new name has been received & logged. We now have 120 days to submit articles of incorporation. We will use template from our most recent updates from Grace’s paperwork in 2015. Next steps to work with NE Synod / ELCA to put together paperwork for their needs. Then we will need to hold a special congregational meeting to dissolve the two and become one, later in this year (likely with constitution & bylaws) - with the expectation to have this done by Jan 1, 2027.

Reports:

Synod Assembly took place at the end of May. Reflections on Immigration & Refugee pieces. Brenda shared thoughts about the theme “Broken Open.”

Ministry Sites - State Farm wants bids on fence replacement at St Lukes. Frank is looking at changing out some video monitoring equipment at St Lukes. Motion to use memorial funds to get a new Night Owl system that Frank found. Motion carried. Frant was able to get a recording of the gentleman who broke into the mailbox at St Lukes, and gave it to the Post Master.

Grow – Another bible study? Yes, but maybe wait until the Fall.

Love – Endowment report distributions ratified.

Serve – Need for two new refrigerators for Loaves & Fishes; ordered & will be delivered on Monday.

Thoughts on new project: adopt someone that needs help in our neighborhood? Assemble blankets for homeless near St Lukes and around the gas station / Park Towers near Grace? Hygiene kits? Work with YES or CIRA or someone similar to help navigate?

Announcements

Still waiting to hear from Canopy South on lawncare, although they are managing it.
Durhams received a quilt of honor from the DAV.
Congratulations!

Meeting was closed in prayer at 6:52 p.m.

Stewardship

Enough For All

Bryan Moyer Suderman wrote this simple camp sing-along song.

There's enough for all if we learn to share it
There's enough for all let's bring the loaves and fishes and offer them to Jesus
There is more than enough for you and me.

A simple song but it expresses the amazing generosity that God desires from God's people.

Your support of ministry makes it possible to provide space, personnel and materials to deepen the spiritual connections to God's goodness and grace.

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!



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
The family of Rev. Terry Nielsen



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, St. Luke's and Grace Lutheran Churches
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 Sarah for running the recording equipment while Pastor and Mary were on vacation!

Thank you Donna, Ron, and Brenda 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 Sara Pahl, Brenda, Connie and Sara Tolley for reading during worship services in June. It is greatly appreciated.

Thank you Madison, Tommy, Jady and Jackson for acolyting during worship services in June. 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 Greg, Janet, Ron, Steve and Dan for your weekly dedication greeting everyone who enters both the entryway and sanctuary before worship services, ushering during worship service and communion assistant.

Thank you Connie, Bob, Greg, Janet, Rose Marie, Donna and Ron, 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 Alma for planting flowers at St. Luke's, they are beautiful.

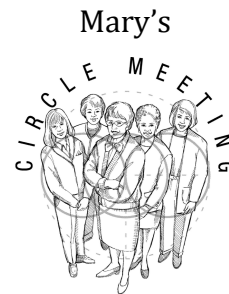
Thank you to all Loaves and Fishes Pantry Volunteers; for delivering food items on Sunday mornings, unloading and putting foods items away until Monday mornings, getting everything ready for Mondays and in greeting and serving all with smiles, care and love!

Romans 8: 24-27, our focus today, contains two powerful themes. First, our salvation comes through hope. Therefore, we must wait for salvation with patience and hope. But it is hard to do, and sometimes we feel that we can't muster up what is needed. Which is why, as St. Paul points out, the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. When we can't find the words to pray, God, who already knows our hearts, can certainly understand our prayers, conveyed by the Spirit without even using words! That's all well and good, but what about the real-life conditions of all that waiting, hoping, and praying?

BIBLE STUDY

Human beings live with aches and pains, with losses, and with disappointments, so we suffer. And, as most of you already know, we seem to develop more difficulties, aches, and pains with each year that we live. What losses and pains, what unmet desires, cause you to struggle with prayer and with giving thanks? (because, elsewhere in his letters, St. Paul stresses, even insists upon the need to pray always and to give thanks in everything. See Rom.12:12, Phill. 4:6, Col. 3:15 and 4:2, and 1Thess. 5:18.) Sometimes, when we share coffee and snacks after worship, I am so tempted to launch into a "poor-me" litany of my current aches and pains. Of course, that would be boring and unpleasant for those around me, so I distract myself with donuts and try to listen first, then respond with at least a modicum of cheer and patience. And, as a practical matter, it helps, when I am in that mood, to ask myself "Who can I help today?" Of such poor efforts is a life of faith made! What ways have you found to bolster your own patience and hope?

Sara welcomes questions and comments, by phone or text, at: 402-686-1693.



St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, July 9, 2026 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Rose Marie Lad will have devotions, Terri Durham will give the lesson and Karen Chapman will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome to come join in the learning, conversation and refreshments.



27416 Ranch Road
Ashland, NE 68003



Join us at the 38th Annual Quilt Auction - Saturday, July 25th

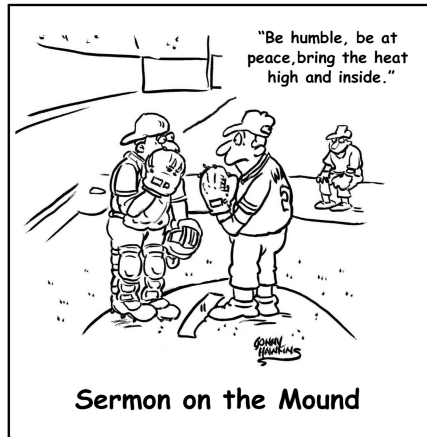
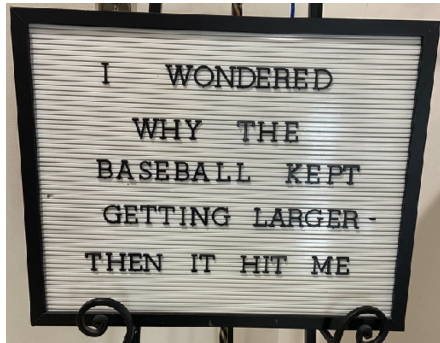
The day promises competitive bidding, good food, great fun, and lots of beautiful quilts donated by friends of camp. Rain or shine, the day will go on! Bring your friends and family. Admission is FREE!

Bidding will open for the Silent Auction Friday, July 24th at 9:00 a.m. and close Saturday, July 25th at 1:30 p.m. Silent Auction is available both in person and online. Silent Auction items will be available for pick up after 3:00 p.m.

Lunch will be served from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., cost is \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids (4-12), and free for children 3 and under. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available upon request.

To view the schedule and preview quilts, visit NLOM.org/quilt-auction.

If you have any questions, contact Trish Haniszewski at thaniszewski@nlom.org or 402-944-2544.



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**Parade
July 18, 2026
10:00am
Downtown Omaha**

THE 2026 THEME

**PRIDE IS A PROTEST.
AND A CELEBRATION.**

Pride began in the street — people marching to be seen, together and unafraid. More than fifty years on, the parade still carries that history forward. We march for visibility, for one another, and for the simple, radical joy of showing up exactly as we are. Everyone is welcome to walk beside us.

The official route and map are being finalized with the City of Omaha. Registered participants receive it at least one week before the parade.

Visit heartlandpride.org one week prior to the parade to view the route through downtown Omaha.



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 worshiping 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**

Terry Nielsen, 71 passed away on May 31, 2026. He was born on September 1, 1954 in Minden, Nebraska.

Terry was baptized and confirmed at Fredericksburg Lutheran Church and graduated from Minden High School. He continued his education at Midland University in Fremont, where he met Sandy! He also attended Wartburg Theological Seminary where he earned his Master of Divinity degree and prepared for a life of pastoral ministry.



Terry accepted his first call to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in DeWitt, NE, for 13 years. In 1994 Terry continued his ministry at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Bellevue.

Throughout his ministry, Terry was known for his steady faith, compassionate presence, and devotion to caring for others through both hardship and celebration. He often reassured those around him with a favorite phrase: "It'll all work out."

In recent years, Terry lived with frontotemporal dementia, a disease that gradually changed the rhythm of daily life for him and his family. They are deeply grateful for the caregivers, friends, and loved ones who walked alongside them with prayer, compassion, and support. Memorials may be directed to the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration (AFTD) to support continued research. Terry's memory will be cherished by all who knew and loved him.

Cards can be sent to Sandy Nielsen, her address is available upon request.

"God, please help us remember that all the darkness of the world cannot snuff out the light of one little candle. Help us to keep lighting our little candles until a mighty torch of justice sweeps our nation and the world."

~ Marian Weight Edelman

"In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us."

~ Hora Edwards

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!

1611 1/2 Farnam Street, Omaha, NE 68102

Hours for Breakfast and Lunch
Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri & Sat. from 7 - 2
Monthly Gospel Brunch Every
Second Sunday 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

TABLE GRACE
CAFE
Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

Gospel Brunch! Table Grace is offering a Gospel brunch once per month on Sundays! July 12th 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.



nebraska
DIAPER
BANK
Changing Diapers Changing Lives

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

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>



Home fires claim seven lives every day, but together we can help change that.

Smoke Alarms Save Lives

Did you know? If a fire starts in your home, you may have just two minutes to escape. The best way to keep your family safe from home fires is to have working smoke alarms.

We are offering free home fire safety information and smoke alarm installations. Appointments take less than 30 minutes.

To schedule your FREE smoke alarm installation, visit redcross.org/smokealarmNE or call 1-833-422-1751.



AseraCare Hospice is in need of volunteers who can provide companionship/socialization, respite for family and caregivers, veteran-to-veteran support, musical entertainment, patient pen pals and administrative support. Asking for a minimum commitment of 5-8 hours per month, but would love additional help if available. Ready to apply? Visit <https://btrr.im.sjmww>. Call Jen Vogt, RVC at (402) 943-6871, or email at: jen.vogt@amedisys.com



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, 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.

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.

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.

A Quarter-Millennium Compared....

This July 4 the United States of America will mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of its Declaration of Independence. That is a notable anniversary, the quincentennial, and the document is one of the most remarkable and influential writings in history. Except for the Bible - which is in its own league, of course - I cannot think of anything that has provided personal freedom for more people than this.

And that is the point of this celebration; no one has reason to take credit for 250 years of existence since no one has been alive for more than 40 percent of its history, but everyone has reason to rejoice about being in a world where this document exists. If you don't understand this, you have your assignment for learning this summer, because the document is of value only as it is alive in the hearts of those who do understand.

There are many countries and civilizations older than ours, such as those from which we emigrated, including England, the object of the Declaration.

Iran, a.k.a. Persia, can celebrate 5200 years. (They passed their Quinmillennial about the time the Declaration was still in its twenties!)

Egypt celebrated its Quinmillennial about the time Theodore Roosevelt was setting up office in the White House.

Vietnam? Just recognized 4900 years. Armenia, 4500.
China and India, just a shade over four millennia.

And all of these have been in the hand of God from the beginning. God is past, present and future, and clearly, while God transcends all of time, we have only right now with God. God has always been with us. We will be with God through all eternity. But, we are only in the presence of God, right now. Presently.

The importance of remembering the founding of this nation is to be reminded of why we value the Declaration, as well as the 239-year-old Constitution, today; the freedom, today; the Government of, by and for the People. Today.

It has never been that we are better than anyone else; it is that we are freer to better ourselves.

This is the time to remember that.

~ Rev. Paul Lintern, JoyfulNoiseletter Editor
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Semiquincentennial Quotes From the Semiquintessential Founders



Without liberty, law loses its nature and its name, and becomes oppression. Without law, liberty also loses its nature and its name, and becomes licentiousness.

~ James Wilson

It will not be denied that power is of an encroaching nature and that it ought to be effectually restrained from passing the limits assigned to it.

~ James Madison

I own I am not a friend to a very energetic government. It is always oppressive.

~ Thomas Jefferson

I have no fear that the results of our experiment will be that men may be trusted to govern themselves without a master.

~ Thomas Jefferson

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

~ Declaration of Independence.

I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery.

~ George Washington

The ordaining of laws in favor of one part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppression of another, is certainly the most erroneous and mistaken policy. An equal dispensation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages, is what every part is entitled to, and ought to enjoy.

~ Benjamin Franklin

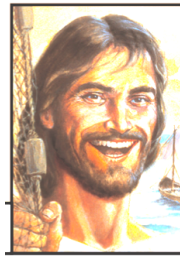
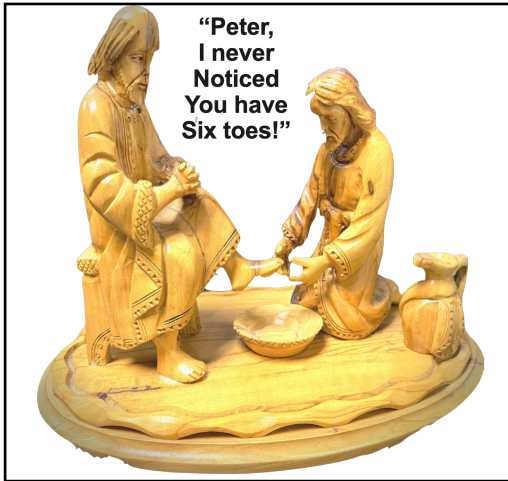
The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence.

~ John Adams

Energy and persistence conquer all things.

~ Benjamin Franklin

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“Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.”
 ~ Teilhard de Chardin, SJ



Dad Jokes for the 250th

Father’s Day in June, Independence Day in July; a perfect time to combine historical with hysterical Founding Fathers and Dad jokes.

Which colonists told the most dad jokes? **Punsylvanians!**

Who was the first ghost in America’s original 13 Colonies? **Pocahauntus.**

What was all the rage at Colonial parties in 1776? **Doin the Indepen-dance.**

Who can jump higher than the Statue of Liberty? **Anyone. Statues can’t jump.**

Why did Christopher Columbus sail to North America? **It was too far to swim.**

Why should you never major in history? **There is no future in it.**

Why does history keep repeating itself? **Because we weren’t listening the first time.**

What do you call an old joke that doesn’t get a laugh? **Prehysterical**

Does England observe the Fourth of July? **Yes, between the third and the fifth.**

C Y Y P C O X A O K T N R I C L O W N S E R K Z
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|--------------------------|--------------|----------|-------|
| united states of america | betsy ross | Liberty | Bell |
| state of liberty | patriotic | balloons | candy |
| stars and stripes | uncle sam | parade | rodeo |
| land of the free | fireworks | barbecue | music |
| antique car show | summertime | family | white |
| corn on the cob | watermelon | clowns | blue |
| independence | sparklers | horses | red |
| constitution | water fights | shorts | flag |
| freedom ring | flip flops | sirens | heat |
| cotton candy | tee shirt | brave | hat |

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