

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
1326 South 26 Street
Omaha, NE 68105-2380

Return Service Requested
Dated Material

Email: graceluth@graceluth.com
Web Site: www.graceluth.com

REGULAR SUNDAY EVENTS

9:00 A.M. Christian Education

10:30 A.M. Worship Service

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker
Editor/Church Secretary – Pam Reents
Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Cody Talarico
Sexton - Ambros Lado/Brian Sutej
Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill
Faith in Action - Julie Chytil

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**Inspired By Christ, it is our mission
to share God's Word and Love in
care and in service to all.**

December 2007
January 2008



*Ye shall find the babe
wrapped in swaddling
clothes, lying in a manger.*

Luke 2:12

THE GRACE MESSENGER



2007 Council Members

Ron Adrian
June Hilmer
Ernest Olson

Andrew Edwards
David Hufford
Brenda Spahr
Pastor Laaker

Sarah Emery
Greg Hula

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Margie Sutej

The regular meeting of the Council was held December 11th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing – Kathryn Reichert, Brenda Anzalone, care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal, we pray for safety of Ivo, direction in becoming a multi-racial congregation, where is God moving us in this issue, all of the unrest and conflict in the world and for safety of all of our military personnel; we pray for all the victims and their families involved with the Von Maur tragedy; we pray for the family that had tried to help Robert Hawkins; we pray for the victims and their families involved with the shootings in Colorado; we pray for the victims and their families involved in the School Bus shooting in Las Vegas; we pray for safety for all the OPPD line men who have traveled to help with power outages in Kansas and Oklahoma; we pray for safe travel for all travelers during this Christmas Holiday; and we pray in praise for David's new granddaughter, Harmony Hope. Pastor led devotions from Isaiah 53:8 and 2 Corinthians 5:18; which led to discussions on the meaning of the word reconcile. Reconcile means restoring a healthy relationship, for instance a healthy relationship with God.

Visions for Ministry: Council concluded sharing in discussion of "One Body One Spirit" by George Yancey, chapter 13, Conclusion.

Reports were received from the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer. Please continue to give generously.

Christian Education: Pastor announced that the Children's Christmas Program has been cancelled.

Evangelism/Outreach: An estimation of 20 people visited Grace Lutheran Church during the Destination Midtown Tour on December 2nd. The New Synod Campaign information was shared; the silent phase will provide funding in several different pieces.

Finance: No new report.

Property: No new report.

Service/Social Ministry: Visiting Nurses Association passed information to Grace with an opportunity to help one of our neighbors with Christmas gifts for the children.

Support/Stewardship: People are currently filling out their Time and Talent sheets as well as pledge cards.

Worship: David Hufford will be meeting with Pastor Liz Connor to discuss forming a youth choir.

Unfinished Business: Pastor is open to new possibilities for a mid-week Sunday School Class; suggestions are welcomed.

New Business: Nominating Committee for next year's council members will be Sarah Emery, Brenda Spahr and Barb Nelson. Pastor has a couple of people to talk to regarding the Audit Committee.

Announcements: Pastor and Mary will be out of town December 25-26th. A pre-announcement for council dinner with Mary and Pastor, the date will be determined and members will be notified. David will bring treats for our January meeting.



We Celebrate Your Birth

Dear Lord, as we celebrate Your birth,
let us remember that You are the true reason for Christmas.
Let every sparkling light remind us how You illuminate our lives,
a shining beacon to guide us in our thoughts and actions each day,
and how You light us from within
in the knowledge of Your love and truth.
Let the Christmas trees, standing straight, tall, unbowed,
remind us of Your uprightness, Your goodness, Your perfection,
and Your refusal to bow to worldly temptations,
no matter how great the challenge or trouble.
Lord, as we feast on Christmas treats,
let us remember that You are the sole provider
of everything worth having, that all good things come from You.
And as we enjoy our gifts, let us never forget
that You are the greatest gift of all--our wonderful Savior,
Counselor, Giver of an eternal life whose wonders we cannot imagine.
So as we delight in Christmas, the happiest and brightest of holidays,
let us remember there would be no Christmas without You, Lord,
and let us our hearts be filled with joy, and love
and thankfulness, this Christmas and all the ones to come.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.
By Joanna Fuchs

Dear Friends and Members of Grace,

The author speaks glowingly in praise of God. Truly we have received the greatest gift in this holy season. God has entered into our life and has become one like us in Jesus, our Christ. God has placed this gift in our lives and invites us to discover Christ anew.

I invite you to come and experience this gift given. A gift, full of joy, love and thankfulness, for each of us. May we praise our God who loves us in Jesus Christ.

My family and I are blessed by your love and care. We cherish your prayers. We see in you the gift of Christ's love that grows and expands.

We invite you to join us in celebration of the birth of our Christ.

December 23, 10:30 a.m. Advent/Christmas Carols and Readings

December 24, 4:30 p.m. Carols, Communion, and Candle lighting

December 24, 11:00 p.m. Carols Communion, and Candle lighting

May Christ Jesus, bring you peace and joy. Merry Christmas!

Pastor and Mary Laaker and family

W/ELCA Board Meeting



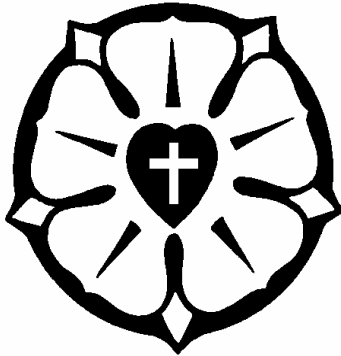
January 8th
1:00 p.m.

Hostess: Gertrude Hufford

W/ELCA Circle Meeting

January 15
1:00 p.m.

Hostess: Barb Nelson



“On Being Lutheran” Study

January 15, 2008

7:00 p.m.

Grace Lutheran Church

Understanding the words of Martin Luther
and applying them today.

Drop-in's Welcome!

Our Mitten tree is filling up thanks to the generosity of our church family. Many hand made items have been donated as well as lovely store-bought items. The tree will continue to stand until at least the end of December/early January when the items will be divided among several organizations. Look for more details in the February Newsletter.

If you see a great buy on warm winter accessories after the mitten tree program is over, don't forget our Sudanese friends. Drop off any winter items at the church office and we will see that a needy family gets them. We have been able to give many of them gloves and hats but there is always a need for more.



Urgent Requests from Project Hope

Items Needed:

Plastic Bags
Canned Soup
Canned Fruit

Paper Bags
Canned meat
Pork & Beans

Bring your donations to the church and place them on the Pantry shelf in the Upper Hall.

Rejoice Glory

IN THE OF CHRISTMAS



Candle Light Services
4:00 p.m.
&
11:00 p.m.

Adult Choir
Candles
Carols
Readings
Scripture

O Come,
Let Us Adore Him!

"There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger."

At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises:

Glory to God in the heavenly heights,
Peace to all men and women on earth who please him.

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child.

All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

The Message, Luke 2:8-12

- ◆ Frances Campsey - Pray for strength and progress for re-stored use of her hand. (member)
- ◆ Ambros Lado - Pray for more recovery from the severe stroke he suffered a year ago. (member)
- ◆ Kathryn Reichert - Cancer treatments (Granddaughter of Don and Norma Olson)
- ◆ Andrew Edwards - Doing dialysis a couple times a week until a kidney can be found. (member)
- ◆ Rex Olson - For healing as he deals with cancer. (relative of members, Don and Norma Olson)
- ◆ Rose Hamilton - Healing for her cancer. (Aunt of members, Andrew and Christi Edwards)
- ◆ Ernie Olson - On-going therapy after his stroke. Pray for help as he is trying to find another job that will enable him to continue gaining strength. (member)
- ◆ Betty Coniglio - Continued recovery from heart issues. (member)
- ◆ Seth Goodman - Recovery from addiction issues. (Nephew of Pam Reents.)
- ◆ John Springborg - For treatment of serious viral infection. (Nephew of Don and Pam Reents)
- ◆ Teri Briley - Recently diagnosed with cancer. (daughter of Gloria and Richard Moore)
- ◆ The family of Alice Friedlander as they mourned the her passing on December 12, 2007.



Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:

Harlan Morter
Lola Harsin
Richard Moore

Evelyn Reimer
Mae Lane
Thelma Harrahill - (In Kansas with her children)

Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here at Grace Church.

Pray for strength and spiritual wisdom for the leaders in the local church and the Nebraska Synod:

Pastor Laaker

Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod

Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States



Pray for the Victims and their Families

Westroads Mall

Are You Connected?



Grace Lutheran Church has two ways for you to uphold each other in prayer. If you did not get our prayer requests this past month and would like to be included, please contact the church office. Our phone number is 341-7730 or email us at graceluth@graceluth.com

*When God does not answer His children according to the letter,
He does so according to the spirit. Charles Spurgeon*



JOIN US AFTER SCHOOL

**4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Monday thru Thursday**

**Games, Crafts, and Fun
Geared for Elementary Kids!**

Free!

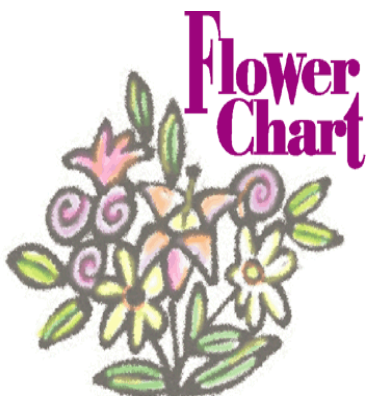
Director, Brenda Spahr
Assistant, Frances Campsey

There will be no After School Program during winter break.
The program will resume on January 7.



Quilting on Mondays! at 9:00 a.m.

If you have the morning free, drop by and help cut squares and tie quilt tops on to the backs. Coffee break is at 10:00 a.m. The quilts go to Lutheran World Relief.



Flower Chart

**The 2008 Flower Chart has been posted on
the bulletin board outside the church office.**

The Flower Chart sign-up is your opportunity to sponsor flowers for a special Sunday in honor of an important event in your family's life or in memory of someone dear to you. The cost to sponsor flowers for a Sunday is \$12.00.



Operation SOS (SAVE OUR SECRETARY) (from being frazzled, pressured, grumpy and generally anxious!) **Annual Report Time!**

All chairpersons from each committee and organization should have their annual report summary in by the first week of January. The treasurer's reports will be due the second week of January. Please try to meet these deadlines so that our report can be put together for distribution on Sunday, January 20.

The Annual Meeting and Potluck is scheduled for January 27th.

Please turn your reports in on time!

"Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service



4205 Boyd St
Omaha, NE 68111



**Pantry
Needs**

Project Hope The Theme for January is **Baking Supplies**

Flour, Sugar, Brown Sugar,
Cooking Oil, Baking Powder,
Baking Soda, Shortening, Bisquick

Project Hope always needs boxes of zip lock bags in quart or gallon size, soup, peanut butter, macaroni, pasta, rice, diapers, bathroom tissue and Toiletries, feminine hygiene items, soap and paper products.

Project Hope Needs Volunteers - Call Project Hope at 453-7649 to volunteer.

One Thursday a Month - Driver is needed to pickup food at the Omaha Food Bank, Nash Finch, the Episcopal Cathedral and other stops in the U Haul sized truck provided by Project Hope. The time commitment is usually from 9:00 a.m. to around 1:30 p.m.

Monday, Wednesday or Friday - Computer data entry person is needed to enter information on our clients in the local database when the pantry is open; Mon Fri - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. or Weds - 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Friday - USDA form completer. Work with clients to get forms ready for submission. 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.



Our youth will hold soup pots at church doors on Souper Bowl Sunday, February 3rd. They will join young people in churches all across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting.

In 2006, youth groups in all 50 states and outside the United States participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring generating \$5,010,510.66. All of the money collected is donated to a charity selected by the participant. None of the money is sent to Souper Bowl headquarters.

Organizers only ask that each participant report their collection so national totals can be determined and announced. Our church will donate the Souper Bowl collection to the Lutheran Pantry. Since the Souper Bowl of Caring became a national grassroots event in 1993, more than \$29 million has gone to help those in need.

Happenin' in the Grace Lutheran Church Library

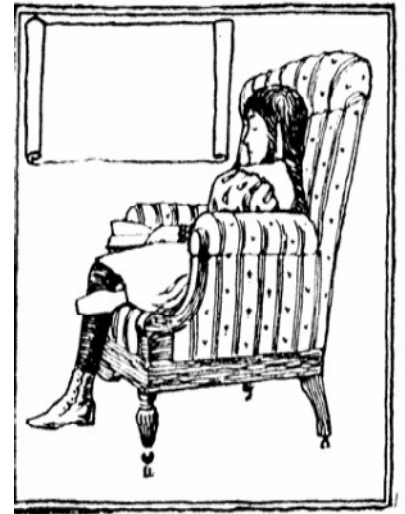
Picture This!

Feet up with a warm blanket around your shoulders, a cup of tea or cocoa and a good book on a cold winter evening.

Your church library is a great place to find something good to read.

More new books have been added to complete several series.

Check it Out!!



Got Your 2008 Scripture Calendar Yet?

This is a beautiful, high quality calendar with scripture verses and wonderful scenes.

Similar calendars at the mall and stationary shops sell for up to \$12.00!

Buy Them for Gifts or for Yourself.

Only \$5.00 each

Hurry! Quantities are Limited!



Back By Popular Demand! 3rd Annual Used book Sale

Book Shelves at Home Too Full? Donate a few for the Used Book Sale!

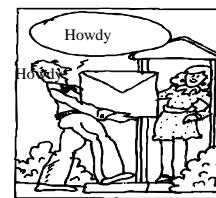
In mid-January, the Library Board will set out a box and will be collecting your book donations in preparation for the book sale beginning on Ash Wednesday.

On February 8th, a table displaying the books for sale will be set up in the Upper Fellowship Hall. Most books are priced inexpensively so be sure to stop by and take a look.

All types of books, fiction and non-fiction, adult and children's are welcome as long as they promote good moral values and are in fair condition.

All the money raised go for Library books and Library Projects.

Community News



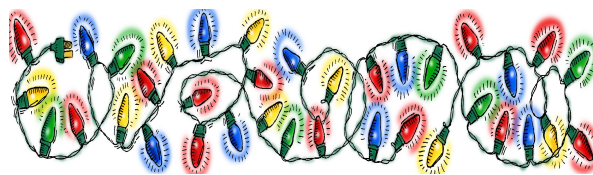
Free Holiday Lights Festival Lighting Display

Through Sunday, January 6, 2008

5:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m. every night.

Gene Leahy Mall

10th to 14th Streets between Farnam and Douglas



There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle.
The other is as though everything is a miracle.

—Albert Einstein



*Make every effort
to keep the unity of
the Spirit through
the bond of peace.*

E p h e s i a n s 4 : 3

Joint Worship Service Scheduled for January 20, 2008

Several churches of different denominations have scheduled a joint worship service at Wheeler Memorial Presbyterian Church for Sunday, January 20, 2008. Wheeler Presbyterian Church is located at 23rd and J Street in South Omaha. The service will begin at 10:30 a.m.

Grace Lutheran Church will not have services here at the church on that Sunday. However, Sunday School classes will still meet at 9:00 a.m. at the church. Look for more information in the bulletin in the coming weeks.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CELEBRATION

Thursday January 11

Noon to 2 p.m., \$12

Metro Community College
Industrial Training Center on
South Omaha Campus
27th and Q streets
457-5231



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Metro Community College will honor Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King, Jr. on Thursday featuring a presentation by VLA Productions of "The Meeting" – a play depicting a fictional meeting between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, two men who seem diametrically opposed but find they are closer in ideology than either could have imagined.



Lead a life
worthy of the calling ...
making every effort
to maintain the unity
of the Spirit in
the bond of peace.
Ephesians 4:1-3

News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church



Alice Friedlander, longtime member of Grace Lutheran Church, went home to be with the Lord on Dec. 12, 2007. She was 80. Services were held at 10 a.m. December 17th at Grace Lutheran Church. Interment was at Hillcrest Cemetery.

Alice was a vibrant member at Grace until a little over a year ago. Her health deteriorated quickly in 2007. In past years, she had been active on the Council, Endowment Board, President of the Library Board, involved in quilting for Lutheran World Relief and many others responsibilities in the church. Alice was a faithful member of Grace Church since 1948. Her gracious gift of hospitality and elegant style will be remembered by everyone she knew.

Alice had a rich career as director of volunteer services at the University of Nebraska Hospital and co-founder of the University Hospital Auxiliary. She served as director of volunteer services at University Hospital from 1972 to 1990. University Hospital is now part of The Nebraska Medical Center. In 1977, Alice co-founded the auxiliary, which provides services and financial support to UNMC and The Nebraska Medical Center. Since 1992, the auxiliary also has awarded student scholarships in Friedlander's name.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Dwight and Alice Lorimer; brother, Richard Lorimer; and son, John Friedlander. She is survived by her husband, Walter Friedlander, M.D., who founded both the department of neurology (now the department of neurosciences) and the department of medical humanities and jurisprudence (now the department of preventive and societal medicine) at UNMC. She also is survived by her children, Ron Van Oeveren and wife, Linda, Jessie Wuerst and husband, Steve, Bert Van Oeveren and wife, Bobbie, all of Omaha, Joseph Friedlander and wife Janelle, of Hazen, N.D., Jeff Van Oeveren and wife, Lyn, of Overland Park, Kan., daughter-in-law, Diane Friedlander, of Buffalo, N.Y.; sisters, Jackie Kalal and husband Don, and Dorothy McGinnis, all of Omaha; 15 grandchildren; and 12 great-grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the Alice Friedlander Scholarship Fund, c/o The Nebraska Medical Center, University Hospital Auxiliary, 987509 Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE 68198-7509.

To My Friends at Grace Church,

Thank you for the great time at the my 80th birthday party on Sunday, December 15th. I went home and read all your cards. I enjoyed reading each one of them. Some of the cards even made me laugh!

I am glad to have so many family and good friends who came to honor me. Thanks for the good times and the good laughs.

Bob Moss and family

John Ivo Mounto sends his greeting back to his friends in Omaha. John recently spoke with his wife, Regina, and asked her to wish you all Merry Christmas. He is doing well in Africa and is very busy with diplomatic relations between Mabaan County, his place of birth, and Southern Sudan. Please keep John in your prayers. Working in any government position is difficult in Africa. Pray for Regina as she is responsible for raising their daughter alone here in the US. She asks God for wisdom to do that well.



Virginia McGill, Director
Gabriella Ortiz, Assistant
Gema Wolde, Assistant
Douglas County Health Department
Se habla español .

Interfaith Health Service Program Receives National Recognition

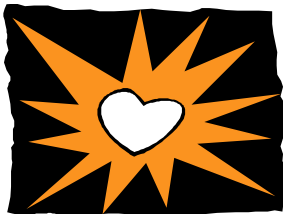
The Latinas in Action program, sponsored by Interfaith Health Service and the Douglas County Health Department, was greatly honored in receiving a major National award last month! Latinas in Action received the Innovation in Health Prevention Award from the United States Centers for Disease Control and the United States Department of Health and Human Services on November 27th.

Latinas in Action won the award in the category of "Faith Based Service". Prior recipients of the award included the American Cancer Society and the University of Maryland Medical Center.

The official press release on the award is printed on the next page. A crew from Washington, D.C., also filmed a video summary piece on the program. The summary is 3 minutes long and highlights our unique and growing ministry in South Omaha. The video will be posted to the following CDC site so that everyone can view it: <http://www.cdc.gov/cochp/conference/index.htm>

A very special thank you to all the pastors, congregation members, board members, donors, students and our amazing participants, volunteers and staff who make the program possible. Interfaith is made up of so many people who do so much, so well, to help promote hope and healing. This award would not be possible without the efforts and prayers of all who support our Interfaith ministry! Many thanks y muchas gracias!

Virginia McGill IHS



**FAITH
IN ACTION**

Happy New Year!

Are you looking to start or just need some help organizing your church outreach?

If so, *Faith in Action* of Interfaith Health Service can help! *Faith in Action* has resources to assist with visiting programs, transportation, meal preparation and much more. Many churches have programs already in place that provide these much needed services to their congregation. *Faith in Action* can be a resource to your program. We can provide free training on a variety of topics, including how to cook healthy meals for the homebound or those who are just coming home from the hospital.

Feel free to give me a call and we can talk about how we can work together.

Best wishes for a healthy new year!

Julie Chytil, Program Coordinator 660-2652
faithinaction2005@hotmail.com

For more information about the national organization, go to
www.fiavolunteers.org or www.faithia.org



"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

1 Corinthians 1:3-4

• *Oh, Tidings of Comfort and Joy!* •

I have been humming that musical phrase for the past two weeks. Perhaps it is because, of all the things I really want for Christmas, comfort and joy would top the list. The news is filled with people suffering; the tragic and sudden loss of loved ones, the economy and its impact on the poor as well as the everyday family, people struggling with ice, snow, and long-term power outages with very little relief in sight - life in general with its daily challenge.

What is "comfort?" I looked it up.

Here are a few of my favorites:

- ◆ to soothe, console, or reassure; bring cheer to.
- ◆ a person or thing that gives consolation. (I'm thinking of the old wool batted quilt my Grandma Carrie made for me. Snuggly warm!)
- ◆ a state of ease and satisfaction of bodily wants, with freedom from pain and anxiety.

I'll admit to being less than festive lately. So much grief. Many people have been a comfort to me this month. This morning, at the urging of my husband, I had a quick breakfast up at the café up the street before heading into work. Since I have lived in this neighborhood over 20 years, I know many of the servers who work there. Each one sang out a welcome as they passed my table. I asked Regina how she was and she replied, "Blessed but I need a hug." Angie smiled at me when I asked about her Christmas plans but underneath there was a sadness as she told me this would be the first Christmas since her beloved grandfather had died. She had taken some time off right before he died to care for him. "He was one of the last relatives I had," she said. "I've sort of felt numb for the last 8 months but I think I'm finally ready to move on with life." We talked of loss and of hope for the future. We hugged each other, too, because we both understood what the other was feeling. I had lunch with my close friend, Marilee, on Wednesday. I vented. She listened. (Thanks, girlfriend:-) I spoke to Brenda yesterday. We shared a few memories about our friend Alice, who moved from her broken and frail body to her heavenly body on Wednesday. We grieved together. We laughed together. We shared our burdens with each other. Tracy, Margie, Janet, Jack, Virginia, Mom, Kate, Don...all these people brought comfort to me this week.

Read Isaiah 40. This chapter is filled with words of comfort. "Why would you ever complain, O (*insert your name*), or, whine, saying, "God has lost track of me. He doesn't care what happens to me"? Don't you know anything? Haven't you been listening? God doesn't come and go. God lasts. He's Creator of all you can see or imagine. He doesn't get tired out, doesn't pause to catch his breath. And he knows everything, inside and out. He energizes those who get tired, gives fresh strength to dropouts."

The Message

As I write this Christmas is only a little more than a week away. The birth we celebrate is of a child who was God incarnate. For those of us who have lost a loved one, God understands loss and sorrow. He gave His own Son to die for our stinky, foul sin. I can take comfort in the fact that my God became flesh. He knows the struggles of human life. His comfort means something because He understands.

Here's a bit of comfort - Jesus came so that we can have a relationship with Him and because of His willingness to pay the price of sin, a death on a cross, we have a "paid in full" pardon before God. Jesus' sacrifice has opened a way for us to be worthy. All we have to do is embrace Him and His pardon. Tell Him to take control of it ALL and release our hurts, struggles and frailty to be handled by Him. The joy comes in knowing He's in charge.

Comfort and Joy to you all!

Pam Reents, Editor



Message from Bishop deFreese after the Westroads tragedy.

Dear friends,

“What then shall we say in response to all this? If God is for us, who can be against us? For God who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. Shall God not also graciously give us all things? Who can separate us from God’s love? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life; neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 8

Besieged with emotions we feel inadequate to express, our community of Nebraska has been confronted with an unspeakable terror. Yesterday, one of our children, so desperate and despondent, chose death as his response to the pain of living...and also chose to afflict so many others with murderous agony. The horrific events overwhelm us with their senselessness and frightfulness. Random outrage killed innocent people simply living life’s tasks. We are filled with sorrow, confusion, anger, and fragile vulnerability.

As those who follow the Christ, how are we to respond?

We grieve together. Sadness permeates this whole event. We ache for those families whose loved ones were so treacherously stolen from their midst. The finality of this appalling choice hurts to the very core. As the painful story of Robert Hawkin’s life unfolds, we again face the dark valley of broken belonging. As our children are startled out of innocence and our own mortality awakens, we bemoan the recognition of the dangers around us. In grief, we reach out, consoling each other.

We tell the truth. Evil is real. Human brokenness and sin have consequences. We do not deny reality with thoughtless mantras that hide the truth. In a society that too often hears: “Everything happens for a reason,” we honestly admit our inadequacy to understand. We also challenge subtle attempts to blame God. God did not cause this, but was present in the midst of the suffering....the God of the Cross was with them and us. God’s heart breaks.

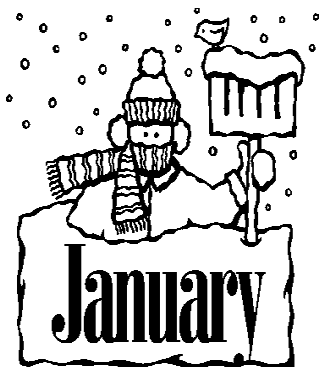
We turn to God...this God who continually turns to us. In this season of “Immanuel....God with us,” we recognize anew the tremendous compassion of our God who came, who comes, and who promises to be with us always. In turning, we also trust the redeeming power of our God who can transform Good Fridays into Easters. We re-tell the story of love so amazing that God would defeat sin, death, and the devil through the Cross of Christ and rise triumphant with the hope of life.

We live with hope. We move forward with purpose. Death and evil do not have the final word...God does!

May the shadow of Jesus’ Cross be cast over all of our lives, and God’s grace uphold and encourage us.

Blessings!

Bishop David deFreese
Nebraska Synod, ELCA



- ♦ January is named after Janus, the Roman god of doorways and of beginnings and endings. He is represented with a two sided head, one looking ahead and the other always looking behind
- ♦ January has 31 days.
- ♦ January's birthstone is garnet.
- ♦ January's flower is the carnation or snowdrop.
- ♦ January is National Soup Month in the United States.

Special Days in January

- ♦ 1 - Happy New Year
- ♦ 8 - Church Council Meets.
- ♦ 9 - Prayer Service of Quiet Meditation.
- ♦ 13 - ALL Annual Report Submissions MUST be in.
- ♦ 14 - "On Being Lutheran Study."
- ♦ 20 - Unity Service at Wheeler Presbyterian Church. No Service at Grace.
- ♦ 27 - Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner

The seasons according to a French Revolutionary calendar:

Autumn - wheezy, sneezy, freezy

Winter - slippy, drippy, nippy

Spring - showery, flowery, bowery

Summer - hoppy, croppy, poppy

**TRUE Questions
as heard at the
information kiosks manned by
Parks Canada staff:**

Tourist: "How do you get your lakes so blue?"

Park staff: "We take the water out in the winter and paint the bottom."

Tourist: "Oh!"

How do the elk know they're supposed to cross at the "Elk Crossing" signs?

Where can I get my husband really, REALLY, lost??



OH.....

We purchased an old home in Northern New York State from two elderly sisters. Winter was fast approaching and I was concerned about the house's lack of insulation. "If they could live here all those years, so can we!" my husband confidently declared.



One November night the temperature plunged to below zero, and we woke up to find interior walls covered with frost. My husband called the sisters to ask how they had kept the house warm. After a rather brief conversation, he hung up. "For the past 30 years," he muttered, "they've gone to Florida for the winter."



An elderly couple was watching television one evening. "I am going to get a dish of ice cream now," the wife said.

Kindly, the husband offered to get the ice cream for his wife. "I'll write it down so you don't forget," she said." "I won't forget," the old gent said. "But, I want chocolate syrup and nuts on it. So, I'll write it down," she replied. "I will get you the ice cream. Don't you worry," replied the husband.

A few minutes later, the old man returned with bacon and eggs. His wife said, "See, I should have written it down because you forgot the toast."

**Laughter is a smile with the
volume turned up.**

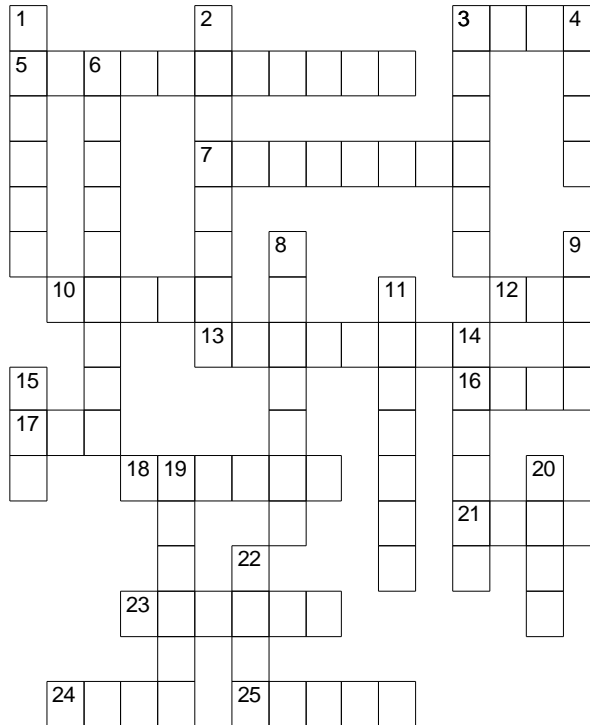
What does an atheist do when he drives up behind a car with a "Honk if you love Jesus" bumper sticker and that car doesn't move when the traffic light turns green?

<http://www.oneliners-and-proverbs.com/>

Matthew, Chapter 11, Puzzle 1

Across

3. hearing impaired
5. training, educating
7. speak against
10. high-pitched
woodwind instrument
12. misery resulting from
affliction
13. one who drinks too
much
16. used for hearing
17. residue from burning
18. jail
21. listen intently
23. give account
24. state of inaction
25. rhythmical steps in
time to music



Down

1. kept from view
2. weighed down, troubled
3. a dry place
4. superior to the average
6. coarse garment worn to
show remorse
8. one who eats too much
9. information, report
11. loud utterance
14. deepest and most
remote part
15. take in solid food
19. turn from wicked ways
20. unable to walk
22. pleasant, enjoyable

WORD LIST

ash	deaf	drunkard	flute	hidden	prison	sackcloth
burdened	denounce	ears	glutton	instructing	repent	woe
calling	depths	eat	good	lame	report	
dance	desert	fine	hear	news	rest	

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All I Need to Know About Life I Learned from a Snowman

- ◆ It's okay if you're a little bottom heavy.
- ◆ Hold your ground, even when the heat is on.
- ◆ Wearing white is always appropriate.
- ◆ Winter is the best of the four seasons.
- ◆ It takes a few extra rolls to make a good midsection.
- ◆ There's nothing better than a foul weather friend.
- ◆ The key to life is to be a jolly, happy soul.
- ◆ We're all made up of mostly water.
- ◆ You know you've made it when they write a song about you.
- ◆ Accessorize! Accessorize! Accessorize!
- ◆ Avoid yellow snow.
- ◆ Don't get too much sun.
- ◆ It's embarrassing when you can't look down and see your feet.
- ◆ It's fun to hang out in your front yard.
- ◆ Always put your best foot forward.
- ◆ There's no stopping you once you're on a roll.

