

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

**Return Service Requested**  
**Dated Material**

**Email:** [graceluth@graceluth.com](mailto:graceluth@graceluth.com)  
**Web Site:** [www.graceluth.com](http://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**

**Non-Profit Org.**  
**U.S. Postage**  
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**Omaha NE**  
**Permit No. 39**

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

**February 2008**



# THE GRACE MESSENGER

## 2008 Council Members



Ron Adrian  
David Hufford  
David Nange

Sarah Emery  
Greg Hula  
Grace Traynor  
Pastor Laaker

June Hilmer  
Regina Ivo  
Brenda Spahr

\*\*\*\*\*

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula

Treasurer: Margie Sutej

Special Thanks to the outgoing 2007 Council members Andrew Edwards and Ernest Olson for their ministry to Grace Church. Thank you for your service.

The regular meeting of the Council was held January 8th. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing – Carrie Laaker as she returns to work, Chuck Pond, Mary Phillips, Diana Hecker, Barb Blasak, Bobby Heesacker, care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal, we pray for safety of Ivo especially during his upcoming travels, direction in becoming a multi-racial congregation, all of the unrest and conflict in the world and for safety of all of our military personnel; we pray for all those involved in the recent natural disasters; we pray for all who have lost loved ones and that they do not lose hope; we pray that people would be more tolerant of one another; we pray in praise for David Hufford receiving good news that the cancer is still in remission. Pastor led devotions from Genesis 37:22 and 1 Peter 1:22; in Genesis surrounding the story of Joseph; Reuben tells his brothers not to shed blood and in 1 Peter Paul tells us to love one another deeply from the heart. This led to discussions to be more tolerant of one another and not to be divided between all the different backgrounds, to get through the division and work toward unity.

Visions for Ministry: Pastor passed out the new books council will be reading for 2008; Effective Small Churches in the Twenty-first Century by Carl S. Dudley.

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

Christian Education: No new report.

Evangelism/Outreach: No new report.

Finance: Council went over the 2008 Budget.

Property: Bob, Jerry or Ken will repair Railing Handle by the back alley door soon.

Service/Social Ministry: The After School Program now has 10 – 15 kids participating on a regular basis. A big Thank-you to all who participated in giving Christmas gifts for the family across the street. ESL classes will start January 12<sup>th</sup> and will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

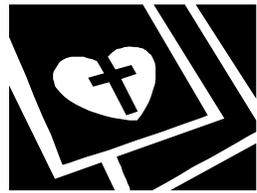
Support/Stewardship: The Financial giving statements will be ready for Sunday distribution.

Worship: Unity Service will be held on January 20<sup>th</sup> at Wheeler Presbyterian and Rev. Chaz Ruark will be giving the message. The Communion ware had to be sent back due to several blemishes and Pastor is currently looking for a local retailer or finding another distributor.

Unfinished Business: The Nominating Committee submit the following names for consideration; Sarah Emery for the 2 year term and Regina Ivo, David Nange and Grace Traynor for the 3 new three-year terms. Jack Williams has been nominated to serve on the Endowment Board.

New Business: Thank-you card from Cody Talarico was shared as well as a verbal thank-you from Brenda Spahr for Christmas gifts from the church council.

Announcements: June Hilmer will bring treats for our February meeting.



# FROM THE PASTOR

What are the unique marks of being a Lutheran Christian? What are the basic beliefs? Long ago people invented the idea of a catechism – a guide for people in need of instruction – novices and veterans, the young and old alike – in the fundamentals of Christian faith. In the earliest centuries, Christians used these study books to prepare new believers for Baptism. As time passed, books of this kind were also prepared for the instruction of baptized believers, too.

For Lutherans, the best known of these study books is the Small Catechism by Martin Luther. It teaches the breadth and depth of the faith held by Christians in a variety of churches around the world. The Small Catechism is also interested in spreading the gospel. Learning his faith from the Bible and in personal experience, Luther came to believe that God created and claimed the whole human race and the planet Earth for the sake of pure love. This trust in God and God's good work with us is at the core of the Christian faith for Christians who claim the title, Lutheran.

Our midweek Lenten worship services will explore five parts of the Small Catechism. Each week, in the midst of the devotional prayer service, Holden Evening Prayer, a local Lutheran pastor will share their thoughts and understanding of one piece of this amazing love of God's good work with us.

- Wednesday, February 13, Pr. Glenn Schacht, Holy Communion
- Wednesday, February 20, Pr. Stephany Sanborn, Ten Commandments
- Wednesday, February 27, Intern John Struckbein, Apostles Creed
- Wednesday, March 5, Pr. Damon Laaker, Holy Baptism
- ◆ Wednesday, March 12, Pr. Rod Hopp, The Lord's Prayer

I hope you will take advantage of these special opportunities to learn more about your Christian faith as Lutherans. Invite a guest to hear and learn with you.

Our Lenten journey begins with Ash Wednesday. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find some interesting tidbits on its history. My Pastoral Messages for Ash Wednesday, the five Sundays of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter morning will seek to help us explore our connections to our ancestors in the faith and hopefully examine where God is leading us today.

I will use as my starting point, *Elizabeth Achtemeier's titles and texts*:

1. The Day of the Lord [Joel 2 : 1-2, 12-17](#)
2. Our Sin Against God [Genesis 2 : 15-17, 3:1-7](#)
3. The Spread of Sin [Genesis 12 : 1-4a](#)
4. Through the Wilderness [Exodus 17 : 1-7](#)
5. Seeking a Shepherd King [1 Samuel 16 : 1-13](#)
6. Can These Bones Live? [Ezekiel 37 : 1-14](#)
7. The Servant Song [Isaiah 50 : 4-9a](#)
8. The Origins of Passover [Exodus 12 : 1-4](#)
9. Such a Transformation! [Isaiah 52 : 13-52:12](#)
10. The Resurrection Is for Everyone [Acts 10 : 34-43](#)

## W/ELCA Board Meeting

February 4th 1:00 p.m.

Hostess: Barb Nelson

## W/ELCA Circle Meeting

February 19th 1:00 p.m.

Bible Study Leader: LaVonne Moss

Hostess: Norma Olson



*Women of the Evangelical  
Lutheran Church in America*



### Lutheran Women of Omaha Luncheon

February 12, 2008

St. Mark Lutheran Church

1821 North 90th

Luncheon at noon

**Program** "The Fun Never Stops"

By Cheryl Stevens Cancer Recovery with Humor

**Project** Monetary to the Cancer Society

**Reservation Required by February 10**

Call Lorraine Palma at 455-4342

Cost is \$6.00 per person

## Mitten Tree Project Brings Winter Warmth to Needy

The Mitten Tree Project concluded in January, bringing in over 100 gloves, scarves, hats and other winter accessories. All the items collected have been donated to local shelters and agencies for distribution. Thank you to all the people of the congregation who donated items to help keep others warm. Many items were handmade.

Your Warm Hearts and Generous Hands Collected:

8 pairs of gloves  
18 pairs of mittens  
78 hats

11 scarves  
5 ear warmers  
8 pairs of slippers



"When I stand before God at the end of my life,  
I would hope that I would have not a single bit of talent left, and could say,  
'I used everything You gave me.'"

—Erma Bombeck



# LENTEN CALENDAR

Ash Wednesday, February 6

6:00 p.m. Lenten Supper: *The Lenten supper will be prepared and served by the Olson and Traynor families to benefit the Christian Education Department.*

7:15 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service: *The service will begin with a quiet time of music, candle lighting, and reflection followed by the imposition of ashes and communion.*

Each Wednesday during Lent:

*Supper begins at 6:00 p.m. (There is no cost for the dinner. Free-will offering only.)*

*The worship service will begin at 7:15 p.m. each evening following supper.*

Speaker Series for Lent 2008

“Exploring our Faith”

*Themes from Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*

Speakers

February 13: Pastor Glenn Schacht on Holy Communion.

Interim pastor, Emanuel Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs, IA.

February 20: Pastor Stephany Sanborn on the Ten Commandments.

St. John Lutheran Church in Mineola, Iowa.

February 27: Intern John Struckbein on Apostles Creed.

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs, IA.

March 5: Pastor Damon Laaker on Holy Baptism.

Pastor at Grace and Assistant to the Bishop for Multicultural Ministries.

March 12: Pastor Rod Hopp on The Lord’s Prayer.

Associate Pastor, St John’s Lutheran Church, Council Bluffs, IA.



*St. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339-397)*



## Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

*“The prayer of a person living right with God  
is something powerful to be reckoned with.”*

*James 5:16b*

- ◆ Frances Campsey - Pray for strength and progress for restored use of her hand. (member)
- ◆ Ambros Lado - Pray for more recovery from the severe stroke he suffered over 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)

### **Pray for our Shut - ins and Nursing Home residents:**

Harlan Morter  
Richard Moore

Lola Harsin  
Thelma Harrahill - (In Kansas with her children)

Mae Lane

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

Pray for the new Council Members. Ask God to bless their new ministry among us.

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 Sudanese community in general. Titus Duli, David Nange and Silas Tuw are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.
- ◆ Remember Ivo Mounto. John is visiting several very dangerous locations in Africa. He says special “peace-keeping forces” will accompany him for this leg of his journey. He already has armed guards with him at all times but this extra security will be needed.

**We Need Updates! Please Contact the church office.**

**Let's encourage each other as we see  
God's hand in answering our prayers.**

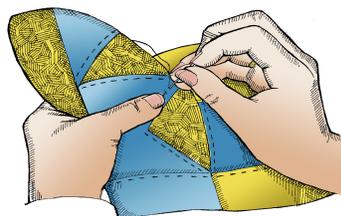
**The value of consistent prayer is not that He will hear us,  
but that we will hear Him.**

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

Games, Crafts, and Fun Geared for Elementary Kids!

Free!

Director, Brenda Spahr



QUILTING GROUP

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

### • F L O W E R C H A R T •



We **still** need volunteers to sign up each month to pick up the flowers for the altar.

Sign up on the Flower Chart if you are willing to help with this task. The flowers need to be picked up before 10:00 a.m. each Sunday morning at the Hy-Vee at 50th and Center. The church is billed so you will not need to pay for them at the time of pick up. Contact Marilyn Van Ormer or Barb Narducci for more details.



## Lutheran Men in Mission Gathering “Coming of Age”

August 1-3, 2008

Hilton Hotel and Qwest Center

Twenty years ago, less than 200 of the founding fathers of Lutheran Men in Mission gathered under the theme “Visions and Dreams” to launch a new men’s ministry, partially supported by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, with the vision and dream that one day it would be a robust, self-supporting ministry of this church, changing the lives of thousands of men. That day has come.

August 1-3, 2008, men of all ages will gather in Omaha, NE, under the same theme verse as the founders, “...your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” (Acts 2:17). We will celebrate 20 years of ministry and launch the next great step. Lutheran Men in Mission will continue to grow and become a financially self-reliant, separately-incorporated ministry of the ELCA. Lutheran Men in Mission will COME OF AGE. More importantly, generations of men will come together in Jesus Christ. We will serve, we will play, we will learn, we will worship, we will encounter God – and each other – and we will grow! Bring your son, bring your friend, and bring your dad – join us.

*Save \$50.00! Register by March 15th. More info can be found on the bulletin board.*



# Happening in the Library!

## Donate your used books

The Library Board is collecting used books, videos, CD's and cassettes in good condition as a fund-raiser for the Library during Lent.

A sale table will be set up in the Upper Fellowship Hall beginning on Ash Wednesday. Stop by the table and browse any time. This is a self-serve sale. A container for the proceeds will be placed on the table along with the merchandise for sale.

Why not use this opportunity to pass on materials collecting dust on your shelves at home to help provide money to buy new books for the library or stop by and pick up a good used book at a GREAT value!

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## Younkers Community Day Saturday, March 1, 2008

Buy a \$5.00 Booklet and get a \$10.00 Coupon!  
Your \$5.00 will go to the Lutheran Pantry.

Each booklet contains a \$10 coupon good on almost any merchandise item priced at \$10 or more (customers spend \$5 for the booklet and get \$10 back on their first purchase!), plus eight 20% off coupons and offers for three great bonus items, available on Community Day only. All coupons are valid on top of the already low One Day Sale prices.

**You are encouraged to purchase multiple Community Day Event packets! A coupon is required for each item selected to receive the \$10.00 off or the extra 20%.**

Contact the Church office or Pastor Laaker  
for Coupon Booklets!



For every  
50 booklets sold,  
the Lutheran Pantry  
receives \$250.00!

It's that easy to raise money  
to fight hunger in the  
Metro!



## Jump Start

About five years ago, the battery in my beat-up VW Beetle had died because I left the lights on overnight. I was in a hurry to get to work on time, so I ran into the

I told her to get into our second car, a prehistoric oversized gas guzzler, and use it to push my car fast enough to start it. I pointed out to her that because the VW had an automatic transmission, it needed

I sat there fuming, wondering what she could be doing. A minute passed by, and when I saw her in the rear view mirror coming at me at about 40 MPH, I realized that I should have been a bit more clear with my directions!

<http://www.gcf.net>



# "Helping Hands"

Working Together in God's service

## Project Hope

The Theme for February is Can Openers/Soup or Stew.

These are things our clients can not purchase with their food stamps.

Diapers	Dish soap	Bar soap
Deodorant	Toothbrush and toothpaste	
Mouthwash (without alcohol)	Feminine hygiene products	
Hair products (combs, brushes, picks)	Shaving Cream	
Razors	Dry Laundry Soap	Bathroom tissue
Kleenex		

We always need paper or plastic bags.

## Can You Spare a Buck or Two?

Our youth will hold soup pots at church doors on  
**Souper Bowl Sunday**  
 February 3, 2008



They will join young people in churches all across the country to collect money for those who are hungry and hurting. In 2004, 12,759 groups in all 50 states and outside the United States participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring generating \$4,260,941.

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 \$24 million has gone to help those in need.

Please support the youth of our church in this effort to "love our neighbors" by dropping your dollar



## Do you have a heart for World Hunger?

Pick up a free desktop box bank to put on your dresser, desk or kitchen counter. Your spare change can make a difference in the lives of the millions who will go hungry without our help. When you have collected your change, put it in an envelope marked "World Hunger" and drop it in the offering plate.

**The banks are located on the table at the back of the sanctuary.**

# Community News



## North Omaha Voter Participation Project Democrats!

This will be your only time to vote for a  
Presidential candidate.

“It’s Caucus Time  
February Nine  
Be on Time”

To vote, you must be at your districts designated  
place by 9:30 A.M. February 9th. The caucus  
runs from 10:00 A.M. until 12 noon.

District 8 - Monroe Middle School

District 11 - North High School

District 13 - Metropolitan Community College  
Building 7

For more information,  
contact 991-3883 or  
email [votenthomaha@yahoo.com](mailto:votenthomaha@yahoo.com)



## Community Dance

Benefit for  
**Omaha Habitat for Humanity**

**First United Methodist Church**  
7020 Cass in Cary Hall

**Saturday, February 16, 2008**  
**7:00 - 10:00 p.m.**

Live Music by  
**Rivertown String Band**  
Squares, reels, waltzes

*No experience necessary*  
&  
*No partner necessary*

Eric Manley, Caller

**Suggested Donation**  
**\$7.00 per person**

**Refreshments served.**

## 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 Epis-  
copal 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 en-  
try person is needed to enter information on our cli-  
ents 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.

## Fabric, Facts and Fun Tanzanian Sewing Retreat

February 24-26

Camp Carol Joy Holling  
27416 Ranch Road, Ash-  
land, NE 68003



Cost (based on room occupancy) includes  
overnight housing, all meals, snacks, session  
fees, one project pattern and a kit of 36 six-  
inch squares of Tanzanian fabric.

Check the bulletin board  
or go to [www.nlom.org](http://www.nlom.org)

# News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church

- ◆ Thanks to Barb Narducci, the very first person to turn in her annual report! Thanks to all of you who worked hard with the office to insure the Annual Report would be as accurate as possible and ready on time. Special thanks to Jack Williams for his dedicated effort and time to help Pam and Pastor produce a clear and concise report.
- ◆ Thanks to all of you who participated in the Mitten Tree Project. Many people will be warmed both physically and emotionally by your gifts.
- ◆ Thanks to the people who generously gave money to the World Hunger Appeal/Disaster Relief in 2007. Our giving to this fund for the year was over \$3,300.00.

*To the wonderful folks at Grace Lutheran,*

*Thanks so much for the gifts and notes of encouragement during the Christmas and Annual Report season. I found little surprises on my desk and in my mailbox.*

*You are in my prayers and on my mind as I go through the day. I often breathe a prayer for you as I come across your name!*

*Thanks for the privilege of serving God together with you,  
Pam Reents, Church Secretary*



## Hibernation Celebration at Camp Carol Joy Holling On Saturday, January 19, 2008 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



Craft-time: Andrea Spahr, Donovan Halfhill  
Marissa Halfhill .



Sing-a-longs and Games



Bird Migration Feeder Activity



Sledding at Camp Carol Joy Holling!



Virginia McGill  
Director

Gabriella Ortiz, Assistant  
Douglas County Health Department  
Se habla español.

*“In working on finding financial ways to help sustain Interfaith programs, one of my tasks is interviewing our participants on why they take part in the Latinas in Action Program. I find it so life-giving to sit down and talk to our participants and document their ideas, hopes and thoughts about programming. Below is a letter from Martha, a long term participant, outlining her experience with the program. I'm proud of our programs and our participants and honored that they share their stories with me. “*

*Virginia McGill, Interfaith*

December 22, 2007

My name is Martha and I am happy to assist Interfaith in writing this letter of recommendation on behalf of the Latinas in Action project. I am 25 years old and my husband and I live in Omaha. I am home full-time with our son who is three and a half years old. I hope to begin working as an interpreter once my son begins school.

I first heard about Latinas in Action from a friend and I decided that in good conscience I should go, too. I had gained weight, and my cholesterol level was very high and I wanted to control it. I began losing weight, so I continued to go to classes. The classes were also something to look forward to doing. They helped me reduce stress and socialize with other women. I made friends in the

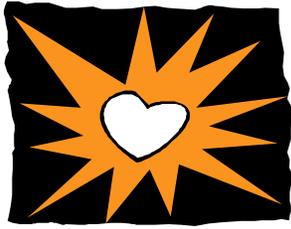
I have received many benefits from the Latinas in Action project. Since joining, I am much more relaxed and I have more energy. When I get home from classes I am in a good mood and I can see things and resolve problems with more calmness. I am glad that my son can go to Latinas in Action with me. He plays with the other children and makes art projects and drawings while I am in class.

I am responsible for all the cooking in my house and the classes help me learn more about healthy eating. The Latinas in Action leaders have shown me how to look at labels, how to look for different calorie content, and how to compare the different nutritional values in food. I have also learned about the quantities of food that are better for me and my family.

Since joining Latinas in Action, I also feel and look better and I like my body more. My self esteem is also better. I feel more positive, more enthusiastic and I have more confidence in myself. I have also learned about domestic violence, breast self exams, children's safety, and the different topics

What I like best about the project is that the people in charge treat all of us very well. I am glad that Latinas in Action is free because I think the majority of the women who attend do not have the ability to pay for classes. The project has helped so many women in the community and I am very grateful because it has helped me and my family.

Sincerely,  
Martha L. Omaha, Nebraska



**FAITH**  
**IN ACTION**

## *A Neighbor's Independence Depends on You*

Are you looking for an outreach service project? We have opportunities for groups (large and small) and individuals. You can be part of the *Faith in Action* family! We have many people who need help and all sorts of opportunities available to fit any individual or group schedule. Below are some individuals that can use some assistance;

Mary\* is 85 years old and has been an independent woman her entire life. She has lived in the same south Omaha apartment for over 37 years. In February she fell and broke her hip. After being in a nursing home and completing rehab, Mary is back at home. She needs help with rides to the doctor, the grocery store or even just a home cooked meal once in while.

Lisa\* recently had surgery and needs some help for the next couple of months with some meal preparation and possible grocery shopping while she recovers.

Stacey\* is a 25 years old and legally blind. After graduating college last year, she moved to Omaha and began working full-time. She needs help with someone to read her mail once a week and help go through other paperwork. Someone who likes cats would be appreciated!

Joan\* works full-time but due to several medical conditions, is unable to drive. She can use occasional rides to the doctor and grocery store.

Susan\* lives in her own home with her two dogs. She could use someone to help her go grocery shopping. She makes a list and a volunteer needs just buy what is on the list!

There are more stories to be shared! These are just a few of the many people who are part of the *Faith in Action* program. Most of these individuals have no family to help them. Think about how you can share your time and talents to help make simple, everyday tasks much simpler for these individuals. Call 660-2652 to find out how.

Julie Chytil  
*Faith in Action* of Interfaith Health Service

*\*Names have been changed*

My mother has a "lead foot," so I was not surprised when a state trooper

Hoping to get off with a warning, Mom tried to appear shocked when the

"What do they usually do, ma'am," he asked, "shoot the tires out?"





## From the Editor

For I know the plans I have for you,"  
declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you  
and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

As I write this, I am just a few days past finishing the church's annual report. When I was in high school and college, I really hated to write papers for my various classes, believing I would NEVER need the skill of writing big presentations like the ones my teachers were asking for. Well, I was wrong! The annual report is just as hard as writing a term paper. Thirty-eight pages full of details about what happened here at Grace over the last year. I could never have imagined this sort of project back in college. So those of you who are young readers, seize the day! Learn it all even if it seems useless because you never know what you'll need for the future.

I wasn't planning to be a church secretary. I thought maybe a medical researcher (but I didn't like the dissection part. Ewww!) or later in my twenties, a music business owner. I was a waitress in a café, a salad and dessert "chef" at a nursing home, a piano teacher for a while, a sales and marketing person at three different sheet music stores in the metro, an 800 operator for several catalogue companies and very lately (since 1999) your church secretary. While these were not careers I chose in my youth, I have learned valuable lessons from each opportunity.

I like to plan and make deadlines. Ask my husband. He hates it when I needle him about his plan. He would rather have a nebulous list of things to do and tackle them one by one with no deadline instead of talking to me "about" his plan. So when I turned 50 in September of 2007, I thought I needed a new plan for myself. A plan for the last part of my life. I guess some of my friends would call it a "mid-life crisis." I thought about all the things I wanted to do but hadn't done. I looked at my situations and wondered, "Is this what I wanted?" Do you know what came of that question? Discontentment! I started to agonize over what new plan I needed. I thought and thought. I strained over my "plans," wondering how I could fix them, how I could make them work better, what I was going to do about them, and which dreams of my youth I had to let go of. The more I struggled, the more confused I became. And, fighting for my plan just made me more miserable.

I was reading my devotional the other day and the verse from Jeremiah 29:11 sprung out at me. Generally, when that happens in my reading, it means God has something to say and I stop there and try to listen to Him. The verse reads, "*For I know the **plans** I have for you," declares the LORD, "**plans** to prosper you and not to harm you, **plans** to give you hope and a future."* I had an "Aha!" moment. Maybe the frustration and confusion I was feeling had to do with the fact that I wasn't really consulting God about what HE wanted. I heard someone say once, "If you want to make God laugh, just show Him your plans." When I was young, my parents said that I couldn't hold up my plans to God and say, "OK Lord, bless them" and expect God to make MY plan work. That's not how God works out His plans for us. His plans for us are revealed when we come with an open heart and mind, willing to look and listen for His leading.

I found special comfort in the fact that it says He knows the plans for my life and that they are plans to give me hope and a future. The main responsibility I have is to be submissive. *Lord, make it so..*

*Pam Reents, Editor*

# FEBRUARY

- ◆ named after the Latin term “februum,” which means purification.
- ◆ The birthstone is amethyst.
- ◆ The flower is primrose or violet
- ◆ February begins on the same day of the week as March and November in a common year ( non-leap year) and on the same day of the week as August in a leap year

## Special Days in February

- 2 - Happy Groundhog Day!
- 3 - Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday
- 6 - Ash Wednesday
- Every Wednesday (beginning February 6th )  
Lenten dinners at 6:00 p.m.  
Worship Service at 7:15 p.m.
- 8 - Confirmation Classes at Cristo Rey Lutheran
- 14 - Happy Valentine’s Day!
- 18 - Presidents Day
- 29 - Leap Year!

"Black History Month is an annual observance, in February, of the past achievements and current status of African Americans. It coincides with the birthdays of the great black leader Frederick Douglass (February 14) and of Abraham Lincoln (February 12).



## Happy Groundhog Day!

People often refer to the second day of February as Groundhog Day. According to many old stories, the groundhog, or woodchuck, comes out of its burrow on February 2 to look for its shadow. If the sun is shining and the groundhog can see its shadow, it goes back to sleep for a while, and winter is not over. If the groundhog cannot see its shadow, it begins its springtime activities



Presidents' Day

Two of America's greatest leaders, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, were born during February. Washington's birthday is celebrated as a federal holiday on the third Monday in February. Some states also honor Lincoln and other American Presidents on this day and call the holiday President's Day. President's Day is celebrated in the United States.

## The Groundhog Carol

To the tune of  
“It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”

It CAME upON a GROUND Hog Day,  
That GLORious RITual OOOOOLLLLLDDDDDDDD.  
We WAIT to HEAR a MARmot SAY,  
How LONG it's GONna stay COOOOLLLLLDDDDDD!  
Peace ON the FARM, this GROUND Hog Day,  
We eat soup and SIIIIINNGGG and DANCE....  
For ONCE the GROUND Hog is UP for  
GOOOODDDDDDD,  
He'll EAT up ALL of your PLAAAANNNTTTTTTS!

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## Children's Bible in a Nutshell (Very Cute!)



In the beginning, which occurred near the start, there was nothing but God, darkness, and some gas. The Bible says, 'The Lord thy God is one, but I think Anyway, God said, 'Give me a light!' and someone did. Then God made the world. He split the Adam and made Eve.

Adam and Eve were naked, but they weren't embarrassed because mirrors hadn't been invented yet. Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating one bad apple, so they were driven from the Garden of Eden. Not sure what they were driven in though, because they didn't have cars. Adam and Eve had a son, Cain, who hated his brother as long as he was Abel.

Pretty soon all of the early people died off, except for Methuselah, who lived to be like a million or something. One of the next important people was Noah, who was a good guy, but one of his kids was kind of a Ham. Noah built a large boat and put his family and some animals on it. He asked some other people to join him, but they said they would have to take a rain check. After Noah came Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was more famous than his brother, Esau, because Esau sold Jacob his birthmark in exchange for some pot roast. Jacob had a son named Joseph who wore a really loud sports coat.

Another important Bible guy is Moses, whose real name was Charlton Hesston. Moses led the Israel Lights out of Egypt and away from the evil Pharaoh after God sent ten plagues on Pharaoh's people. These plagues included frogs, mice, lice, bowels, and no cable. God fed the Israel Lights every day with manicotti. Then he gave them His Top Ten Commandments. These include don't lie, cheat, smoke, dance, or covet your neighbor's stuff. Oh, yeah, I just thought of one more: Humor thy father and thy mother. One of Moses' best helpers was Joshua who was the first Bible guy to use spies. Joshua fought the battle of Geritol and the fence fell over on the town.

After Joshua came David. He got to be king by killing a giant with a slingshot. He had a son named Solomon who had about 300 wives and 500 porcupines. My teacher says he was wise, but that doesn't sound very wise to me. After Solomon there were a bunch of major league prophets. One of these was Jonah, who was swallowed by a big whale and then barfed upon the shore. There were also some minor league prophets, but I guess we don't have to worry about them.

After the Old Testament came the New Testament. Jesus is the star of the New Testament. He was born in Bethlehem in a barn. (I wish I had been born in a barn, too, because my mom is always saying to me, 'Close the door! Were you born in a barn?' It would be nice to say, 'As a matter of fact, I was.') During His life, Jesus had many arguments with sinners like the Pharisees and the Republicans. Jesus also had twelve opossums. The worst one was Judas Asparagus. Judas was so evil that they named a terrible vegetable after him. Jesus was a great man. He healed many leopards and even preached to some Germans on the Mount. But the Republicans and all those guys put Jesus on trial before Pontius the Pilot. Pilot didn't stick up for Jesus. He just washed his hands instead. Any way's, Jesus died for our sins, then came back to life again. He went up to Heaven but will be back at the end of the Aluminum. His return is foretold in the book of Revolution.

*From Ray Kerley*

"She keeps repeating it over and over again. We've been back to this shelter at least five times. It has been weeks now since we started all of this," the woman told the volunteer.

"What is it she keeps asking for?" she asked. "Puppy size!"

"Well, we have plenty of puppies, if that's what she's looking for."

"I know. We have seen most of them," the mom said in frustration.

Just then, the young child came walking into the office. "Well, did you find one?" her mother asked.

"No, not this time," she said, with sadness in her voice. "Can we come back on the weekend?"

The two women looked at each other, shook their heads and laughed. "You never know when we will get more dogs. Unfortunately, there's always a supply," the volunteer said.

The young child took her mother by the hand, and headed to the door. "Don't worry, I bet we'll find one this weekend," the child said.

Over the next few days, both mom and dad had long conversations with her. They both felt she was being too particular. "It's this weekend, or we're not looking any more," Dad finally said in frustration.

"We don't want to hear anything more about puppy size, either," Mom added.

Sure enough, they were the first ones in the shelter on Saturday morning. By now, the young child knew her way around, so she ran right for the section that housed the smaller dogs. Tired of the routine, her mom sat in the small waiting room at the end of the first row of cages. There was an observation window, so you could see the animals during times when visitors weren't permitted. The woman watched her daughter through this window.

The young girl walked slowly from cage to cage, kneeling periodically to take a closer look. One by one, the dogs were brought out, and she held each one. One by one, she said, "Sorry, you're not the one."

It was the last cage, on this last day in search of the perfect pup. The volunteer opened the cage door, and the child carefully picked up the dog, and held it closely. This time, she took a little longer.

"Mom, that's it! I found the right puppy! He's the one! I know it!" she screamed with joy. "It's the puppy size!"

"Sweetie, it's the same size as all the other puppies you held the last few weeks," Mom said.

"No, not size --- sighs. When I held him in my arms, he sighed," she said. "Don't you remember? When I asked you one day what love is, you told me love depends on the sighs of your heart. The more you love, the bigger the sighs!"

The two women looked at each other for a moment. Mom didn't know whether to laugh or cry. As she stooped down to hug the child, she did a little of both.

"Mom, every time you hold me, I sigh. When you and Daddy come home from work and hug each other, you both sigh. I knew I would find the right puppy if it sighed when I held it in my arms," she said. Then, holding the puppy up close to her face, she said, "Mom, he loves me. I heard the sighs of his heart!"

Close your eyes for a moment, and think about the love that makes you sigh. I not only find it in the arms of my loved ones, but in the caress of a sunset, the kiss of the moonlight, and the gentle brush of cool air on a hot day. They are the sighs of God.

Take the time to stop and listen. You will be surprised at what you hear.

## Puppy Size

