

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

THE GRACE MESSENGER



APRIL

April 2007

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

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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
Sudanese Ministries - John Ivo Mounto
Youth Ministries - Brenda Spahr
Organist - Cody Talarico
Sexton - Ambros Lado/Jason Bauer
Interfaith Health Ministries - Virginia McGill
Faith in Action - Julie Chytil

2007 Council Members

Ron Adrian	Andrew Edwards	Sarah Emery
June Hilmer	David Hufford	Greg Hula
Ernest Olson	Brenda Spahr	
Pastor Laaker	John Ivo Mounto	

Officers Serving the Congregation but not on Council:

Financial Secretary: Janet Hula Treasurer: Margie Sutej



The regular meeting of the Council was held March 13. The Council members shared their prayer concerns: Care for those in need of healing – Ivo Mounto for a safe and quick return, Darlene and Ken Spahr coping with COPD at home, Jim Horwath for the three foster children who were returned to their mother, David Jacobs who is now home doing great, Bernard Jacobs for his lung cancer, the Alsager family with the passing of Flo Alsager, all the people in the South with the recent bad weather and the fire in New York City that claimed the lives of nine children, a desire for positive changes in Iraq, care for those within the Grace family that they continue to heal and for safety of all of our military personnel, and for Pastor Laaker for well deserved rest and relaxation during his Sabbath. Greg led devotions from Proverbs 18:10 and Matthew 7:24; which spoke about God's strength and our faith in God and using that faith in the foundation of our lives.

Visions for Ministry: Council continued sharing in discussion of "One Body One Spirit", which included the differences of multiracial, multicultural and multiethnic around us.

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

Christian Education On Being Lutheran classes are continuing. Everyone is welcome.

Evangelism/Outreach reported that recently there have been a very good number of women attending the Survival English Classes on Saturday mornings.

Finance had no new report.

Property had no new report.

Service/Social Ministry had no new report.

Support/Stewardship The Library is requesting that church members please order your t-shirts. To date, \$33.75 has been collected from the Lenten Book Sale in support of the Library.

Worship Choir will sing on several times during Holy Week and Easter.

Unfinished Business: Possible candidates for church council were discussed.

New Business: None.

Announcements: The next joint meeting with St. Luke's and Cristo Rey councils will be Monday, April 16, 6 p.m.



Well, it has been a month since I departed for this Sabbatical time. In this past month, here are a few of the things that I have enjoyed doing.

I began by participating in the Assistants to the Bishop Conference in Galveston, Texas. The theme of the conference was “Islands of Hope: Weathering the Storms.” This is a very tumultuous time in the church. Many of the things that we’ve just learned how to do would work great if we could turn back the clock to the 1960s and 70s. However, we can’t. We must adjust and adapt. Our speakers challenged and encouraged us.

Following the conference, I participated in the Port Arthur, Hurricane Recovery Project sponsored by Lutheran Social Service Disaster Response. My goodness, much work remains to be done to help the thousands who do not have the resources to repair their homes. I got to work on a roof. Sorry, no falls to tell about.

I attended a conference “Mediation Skills Training Institute.” This was held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This training institute was important for the work that I do within the Nebraska Synod. I learned about the following:

- Biblical foundations – finding renewal in conflict.
 - Individual styles of response to conflict.
 - Win-win negotiation skills.
 - Skills to mediate conflict between individuals.
 - Tools to effectively manage congregational conflict.
- Skills for serving as an outside consultant to conflicted churches.

This probably doesn’t sound like much fun to you, but it is something I enjoy. I trust I will get to use what I learned in many different settings.

I then attended a conference “Here I Stand: Leading Change through Self-Differentiation.” Yes, it sounds like something I’d enjoy and I did. I began working on the concepts, this conference explored in greater depth, back in 1993-95 for my Doctorate in Pastoral Care. I attend a conference every year in the fall that also helps keep me grounded in these concepts. I look forward to using what I’ve learned in a variety of settings in the future.

Mary and I then took about a week to visit Micah and Carrie in California. Micah has told us lots about the very temperate climate they enjoy and we just had to check it out for ourselves.

Well, we are now halfway through this sabbatical time. I trust all is well with you. Thank you again for this time to renew, restore and recharge.

Pastor Laaker

What if you are just a spark?
All fires are the same size at the start.



Men in Mission Breakfast
Saturday, April 21, 2007
8:00 a.m.

Come have a great breakfast and great fellowship!
Stay to study God's Word.

*What will God do in your life if you commit
to listening to and sharing the Gospel?.*

W/ELCA Board Meeting

April 2, 2007
1:00 p.m.

Hostess
Norma Olson



*Women of the Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America*

SEW FUN!

The quilters are making beautiful quilts for
Lutheran World Relief and little lap robes for
some of the patients at local nursing homes.



Want to help?

They meet most Mondays
from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

No special skills required.
(except the desire to laugh and chat
with some awesome ladies!)

Want to connect with women of faith?
How about studying God's Word together?

Come to the
W/ELCA Circle Meeting

April 17, 2007
1:00 p.m.

Bible Study Leader
LaVonne Moss

Hostess
Barb Narducci

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

Games, Crafts, and Fun
Geared for Elementary Kids!

Free!

Director, Brenda Spahr

Remember!

If OPS is not in session, there is no Afterschool Program



JOIN US
AFTER
SCHOOL



Lutheran Women of Omaha Luncheon

St Paul's Lutheran Church

13271 Millard Ave

April 10, 2007 at Noon

**Program
Project**

**Amazing Technicolor Show from Westside Choir
To be announced**

Reservation Required by April 8, 2007

Call Lorraine Palma at 455-4342

Cost is \$5.00 per person



Holy Week at Grace Lutheran

April 1
9:00 a.m. Sunday School.
10:30 Worship Service.



Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, April 5
6:00 p.m. Lenten Supper.
7:15 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service.

Good Friday, April 6
No Supper.
7:15 p.m. Good Friday Service.





Sunday, April 8
Come and Rejoice With Us!

6:30 a.m.
Sunrise Service of Celebration.

7:30 a.m.
Breakfast

9:00 a.m.
Sunday School

10:30 a.m.
Worship and Rejoicing.
Music, Meditations, Children's Feature

Join us for a time of joyful proclamation of the
Resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Visitors Welcome!

Lord you have given
Each of your children
A hope and a destiny

You gave us life
The day you died
And set our spirit's free

With each new day
That comes along
We live to honour Thee

©By M.S.Lowndes





Prayer Concerns from Family and Friends

- ◆ Thelma Harrahill - Hospitalized. (member)
- ◆ 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. (Don and Norma Olson)
- ◆ Rose Hamilton - Healing for her cancer. (Aunt of members, Andrew and Christi Edwards)
- ◆ Frances Campsey - Health concerns. (member)
- ◆ Linda Whitney - Struggling with on-going cancer. (Friend of LaVonne Moss)
- ◆ Dan Reents - Continued remission from cancer. (Brother-in-law of Pam Reents, Church Secretary)
- ◆ Ernie Olson - On-going therapy after his stroke. (member)
- ◆ Alice Friedlander - To gain strength after an injury to her back. (member)
- ◆ Darlene Spahr - COPD, Slow recovery. **Praise item:** Darlene is back at home after a long illness. Pray for strength for both Darlene and for her husband, Ken, as they try to transition her being home. (member, Brenda Spahr's mother-in-law.)
- ◆ Harlan Morter - To gain strength after being hospitalized. (member)
- ◆ Betty Coniglio - Continued recovery from heart issues. (member)
- ◆ Ron Andersen - Tests being done for tremors. (member)
- ◆ Mae Lane - Recovering at daughter's after being hospitalized. (member)
- ◆ Ana Lopez - Teen with long term medical needs. (Family involved in ESL food basket project)
- ◆ Ambros Lado - **Praise item** - Ambros' rehab team is preparing him to come in a month or two and work in the church for about an hour a week. They want to use the time for on site therapy. They will bring him and help him retrain his muscles to do such tasks as dusting and vacuuming the Sanctuary. Pray for Ambros and his team as they practice these skills. Pray for courage.
- ◆ Seth Goodman - **Praise item:** Seth has completed 3 months sober in his rehab. Continue to pray for courage and strength to overcome his addiction in rehab. (Nephew of Pam Reents.)
- ◆ Charles and Maxine Moyer - Maxine has been diagnosed with cancer. She was the primary caregiver for Charles. They are the parents of Loren Moyer. Pray for strength for all involved. Loren and his siblings as well as their spouses are taking turns caring for mom and dad on a rotating basis, 24 hours a day. (Parents of members, Loren and Marsha Moyer)

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

Pastor Laaker (on sabbatical leave)

Pastor Neal Von Seggern (Serving Grace Lutheran while Pastor Laaker is on sabbatical)

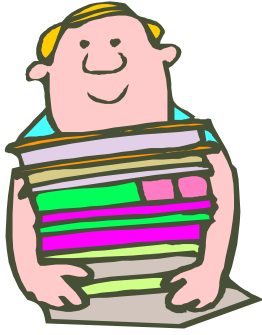
Bishop David deFreese, Nebraska Synod

Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCA Bishop, United States

Pray for wisdom for your Church Council here Grace Church.

Sudanese Church Requests

- ◆ Please pray that John Ivo Mounto returns home safely from his trip to Sudan. His wife, Regina, spoke to him Friday, March 16th. He is arranging shipments of food to be sent to Mabaan. Since fighting has resumed there, most of the food sources and stores have been destroyed. The people in the area are struggling with hunger and safety issues. Pray that Ivo would be able to meet the needs of his people and return to the USA soon.
- ◆ Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Pray that the elders in the church community will have wisdom in their counsel. **Praise item:** The Mabaan Community has held elections for elders in Des Moines. Pray for the tribe. It must be difficult without Ivo Mounto who was a unifying leader among the Mabaan in American. Pray that the elders would be wise in their counsel to the people under their care.



Happening in the Library!

- ◆ Thanks to all the people who donated books and purchased books to make our Lent book sale. Special thanks to Eva Martin for all her organizing, pricing and display during the book sale.
- ◆ Thanks to the Collett family for their generous donation of a huge box of children's books. The Collets attend Our Lady of Lourdes.
- ◆ Several new books have been added to the library. Stop by and check out a book. Take a short "book" vacation!

Why Reading is an Important Activity to Add to Your Day!

Research shows that avid readers:

- ◆ read better write better concentrate better.
- ◆ are quicker to see subtleties.
- ◆ have an easier time processing new information.
- ◆ have many interests and do well in a wide variety of subjects.
- ◆ develop an ability to understand how other people think and feel.
- ◆ acquire the ability to sift information and to understand how unrelated facts can fit into a whole.
- ◆ tend to be more flexible in their thinking and more open to new ideas



Reading a book from your church library has an added benefit:

- ◆ It can help you grow in your relationship to God!

Have You Ordered Your Shirt Yet?

Time is Running Out!

Here is your chance to

- ◆ Get a great looking shirt.
- ◆ Let people see our church loyalty.
- ◆ Strike up a conversation about our church, where we are and what we believe.
- ◆ Help raise funds for our church library.

Show our neighbors that
"We Are One In Spirit!"

Fundraiser for the Church Library

T-shirts \$9.95

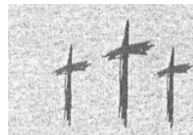
Sweatshirts \$14.95

Polos \$24.95

Sizes - S-XXXL



Sponsored by the
Grace Lutheran Library Board.



T's and Sweats are Gray
with black and red print.

Order Yours Today!

A Poster with Color Pictures of the Shirts
and the Order form is located on the Church
Library Window.

**Deadline for Orders
is April 13th!**

Polos are available in choice of 2 colors:

Red or Gray
with black Print

**"Action springs not from thought, but from
a readiness for responsibility."**

Dietrich Bonehoffer

Thanks for Making Daffodil Sunday Such a Success!

**Grace Lutheran Church Raised
over \$300.00**

The money raised will go for the American Cancer Society's
many programs and ongoing research.



Did You Know...

Your American Cancer Society provides programs and services, free of charge, that are vital to the fight against cancer and to the quality of life of those living with and recovering from cancer. Below please find a brief list of programs and services benefiting you right now in the state of Nebraska. These programs are made possible through the generosity and support of our volunteers. It is through their fund-raising efforts these programs can continue to benefit Nebraska. Please contact your American Cancer Society at 800.642.8116 for more information.

- ◆ Vital cancer research funding at Nebraska universities.
- ◆ Wigs, nutritional supplements and transportation provided free of charge.
- ◆ Information for cancer patients and their families -
24 hours a day, 7 days a week: Cancer Information Center (1-800-ACS-2345)
- ◆ Information for cancer patients and all other interested people on the
World Wide Web: American Cancer Society webpage (www.cancer.org)
- ◆ Gaining support from others who have been touched by cancer: Cancer Survivors Network
- ◆ Information to help cancer patients prepare for treatment
- ◆ Cancer patient lodging during treatment: The Guest Room Program
- ◆ Look Good...Feel Better - self-help program
- ◆ "TLC" - A catalog of products for women both in treatment and past treatment
- ◆ Free air transportation to treatment for cancer patients who cannot afford
commercial airfare (restrictions apply) - provided by AirLifeLine
- ◆ Advocacy and legislation at the federal, state and local level
- ◆ Newsletters to keep you informed about advocacy and legislation affecting
cancer and cancer patients
- ◆ Educational materials to help prevent cancer and detect it early
- ◆ News coverage to help your community in its fight against cancer
- ◆ Fund-raising events for cancer research and patient programs.

1.800.ACS.2345 / www.cancer.org / Hope.Progress.Answers.

Kids At Work 2007



Kids At Work Youth Work Program

Sunday, June 3 through August 1, 2007

Sunday Worship Attendance Required

Tuesdays and Wednesdays - Work Days

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Brenda Spahr, Director

551-4347

The Lent Dinner on March 21st went very well. A very big THANK YOU to all the youth who helped serve the dinner, pour drinks and serve the yummy cake for desert. They were Bradley Collett, Andrea Spahr, Donovan and Marissa Halfhill. A special THANK YOU to the two cooks and servers, Eva Martin and Lydia Halfhill for making very delicious baked spaghetti.

Watch your mailboxes; invitation letters and contracts will be mailed out soon!

I'm asking that same old question again; would you like to volunteer to be a team leader for Kids At Work? If you are not quite sure if you could commit to the program, ask some prior leaders like Linda Pafford, Jim Costello or our organist, Cody Talarico. If you want further research, talk to some of the kids who have been apart of the program, like Julia, Samantha, Angela, Alexandra, Shaban or Shedun. Be the first volunteer for the summer of 2007, it's really a great experience for everyone involved!

Brenda Spahr



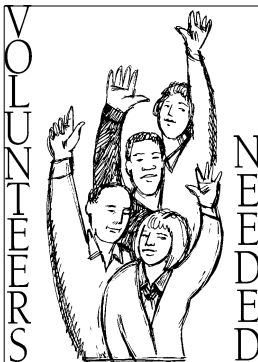
"Helping Hands"

Hope for the hungry, hopeless and homeless.

Project Hope

The Theme for April is Macaroni and Cheese

How about donating a can of peas and a can of tuna? Instant tuna casserole!



A volunteer is needed to pick up food items donated at the church and deliver them to Project Hope while Pastor Laaker is away. If you are willing to do help, contact Pam in the church office.

Old Mother Hubbard's
Cupboard is getting bare !

Not really...

but our food donations

aren't keeping up with demand!

Help us!

Would you please consider donating some canned food for Project Hope during April? Many people are calling the church office looking for help. All of our food and moneys raised go to pantries in the Lutheran Pantry system.



Community News

Join the Neighborhood Association!
Membership dues
\$5.00 a year per household!

Send your money to
CPNA care of Grace Lutheran Church
1326 S 26 Street
Omaha, NE 68105
Call 341-7730 for more information.

Columbus Park Neighborhood Association



Next Meeting - April 19
Grace Lutheran Church - 1326 S 26 St.
Topic - Final Planning for

Neighborhood Spring Clean Up
May 12th
Don't Miss This Meeting!

Columbus Park Neighborhood Cleanup

Saturday, May 12, 2007

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

NO EARLY DROP OFFS!

*St Vincent dePaul Parking lot at
21st & Leavenworth*

Tires accepted.
Keep yard waste separated.
No appliances, concrete or chemicals.

Drop by our Neighborhood Concession Stand!

Proceeds to help with Projects in the
Columbus Park Neighborhood Area.

Volunteers Needed

- ◆ People to distribute flyers on their block to spread the word!
- ◆ Help set up early on Cleanup Day.
- ◆ at the Trash Site.
- ◆ Drivers with Pickups.
- ◆ People to help pick up loads from our disabled and elderly neighbors
- ◆ Baked goods to sell at the concession stand
- ◆ Bilingual (Spanish and English) person to help translate flyers and newsletters for our Spanish speaking neighbors.

To volunteer or for more information,
contact Don Reents at 342-6754.



Need Some Help with Your Life?

**Free Counseling is available
through the Community Counseling Program**

Allyson Campbell, CMSW, LMHP is available to offer confidential counseling to anyone regardless of their ability to pay. Her office is at St Luke's Lutheran Church, 2315 I Street. Her hours at St. Luke are Tuesdays and Thursdays for 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Call 733-0172 to set up an appointment.

The goal of the Community Counseling Program is to bring professional counseling offices closer to people's homes and ensure these services are available to everyone regardless of ability to pay. The service is made available to members of the community through support from the Nebraska Methodist Hospital Foundation, St Luke's Lutheran Church, and Omaha Public Schools.



A Night of Comedy

FREE OF CHARGE

St Timothy's Lutheran Church
510 N 93 Street

April 20, 2007

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Free fellowship, dessert, and
clean comedy provided via satellite
by top Christian Comedians.

A free will offering will be collected and sent to World Vision to benefit hunger

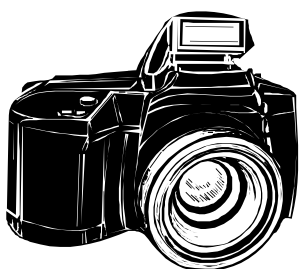
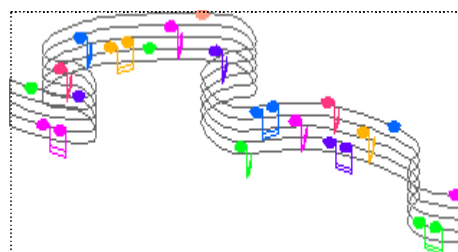
College of St Mary Concert Series

Saturday, April 14
Spring Choral Celebration
5:05 p.m. Choral Prelude

St. Cecilia Cathedral
701 N. 40th Street, Omaha

The CSM Chorus and Musica Sacra will present a twenty-five minute
choral prelude of Easter music and then serve as the liturgical choir for the 5:30 p.m. Mass.

Free admission.



Hilmer Art Gallery on the CSM Campus
Ground floor of Walsh Hall

Photography Exhibition - Kent Behrens and Friend

March 16 - April 20

Closing Reception, April 20, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Free Admission

Hanscom Park Church

4444 Frances Street
1 Block South of 45th and Center
Saturday April 21
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Used Book Sale (by the lb),
Lunch, Bake Sale, Garage Sale,
Gift Baskets and Crafts



News from the Families of Grace Lutheran Church

- ♦ Our sympathy to the family of Flo Alsager. Flo passed away on March 12 just 6 days shy of her 101st birthday. A service was held at the church on March 16th. Thank you to all the people who provided food, memorials, and their prayers, love and support to the family during this time of mourning.
- ♦ Thank you to all the folks who donated, prepared and served our Lenten dinners. Your ministry went to benefit several projects in the church as well as Kids At Work, the Library and a little extra support for Ambros Lado and his family.



80th Birthday Celebration

Jim Costello's family invites the people of Grace Lutheran Church and other friends to join in celebrating Jim's 80th birthday on Sunday, April 15th. A card and cake reception is planned after the morning worship service at 11:30 a.m. Cards only please.

For more information, contact Janet Hula through the church office.

You asked for them....and here they are!
Popular recipes from the recipe collection of Janet Hula!

Almond Bars

Janet Hula 02/2007

4 Eggs
2 C. Sugar
¼ tsp. Salt
1 C. Melted Butter
2 C. Flour
1 Tbsp. Almond extract
Almonds - small pkg, or about 1/2 C, slivered

Beat sugar and eggs together. Add salt. Add remaining ingredients. (I add half of almonds into batter). Grease and flour a jelly roll pan; spread batter evenly.

Sprinkle extra almonds and sugar on top for looks.

Bake at 325 degrees for 20-25 minutes. ENJOY!

Pickled Mostaccioli

Jo Costello / Janet Hula 02/07

1 lb. Mostaccioli or Penne Pasta
Water - Salt
Yellow food coloring
Cooking oil

Cook pasta in salted water with food coloring until tender, but not soft.

Drain and wash thoroughly in cold water. Coat lightly with cooking oil.

Sauce

3 C. Cider vinegar
1 Tbsp. Accent
1 ½ C. Sugar
1 Tbsp. Garlic Powder
1 tsp. Salt
2 Tbsp. Prepared mustard
1 tsp. Pepper

Add mustard to dry ingredients. Add vinegar and mix well. Pour over pasta, cover and refrigerate. Stir often. Must set overnight.

Will keep in refrigerator for several months.

A bird in the hand is safer
than one overhead.



I used to think I was indecisive,
but now I'm not too sure.



Dear Friends and family,
Marilyn and I want to thank all of you who have been praying for us during my recent back surgery. Your prayers, cards and phone calls of support and love encouraged us immensely. God has blessed us with good and faithful friends.

I am sure your prayers made this surgery and my recovery go well.

May God Bless you all,
Jerry and Marilyn Van Ormer.



Thank You!
to the Members of

Grace Lutheran Church
from the

Nebraska Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
In grateful appreciation for giving
\$6,120.00

for Mission Support beyond the congregation for synodical
and church wide ministries of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in American

Thanks,
Rejoice! Lutheran Church



Special Thanks to the Rejoice! Lutheran Choir for sharing their Easter cantata with us at Grace Lutheran Church on March 25th. Over 98 people attended worship that morning. The 30 member choir presented scripture readings and music. A cookie reception followed the worship service. Thanks to all in our congregation who provided cookies and helped with serving and clean up.



Virginia McGill
Director, (402) 660-6689

Assistants:
Gabriella Ortiz, 660-1035
Gema Wolde
Douglas County Health Department
Se habla español.

GRADUATE STUDENTS TO ASSIST

INTERFAITH HEALTH SERVICE WITH PROGRAMS

For the next 4 months, Interfaith Health Service and Douglas County Health Department are welcoming several Graduate students as program volunteers. Dr. Jennifer White, with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, designed her graduate course syllabus with Interfaith specifically in mind. Her hope was that her student would gain experience in cross-cultural education and exercise practices. The students, Miriam, Missy, Beth and Kelly are all nearing completion of master's degrees in Health and Exercise Sciences.

During the semester, the students will work closely with our exercise and educational programs. Currently, they are participating in our morning and evening classes and it is a treat to have them on site. They are finding it challenging to keep up with our women who have been attending aerobics classes regularly!

The students bring an expertise in nutrition, exercise and health maintenance, as well as an enthusiasm for learning from our Latina participants. After the students participate in classes for a few weeks they will begin working with Patty, Gema, Gaby and me to develop additional health education materials. Additionally, they will work side by side with our exercise instructors, Hilda and Christina, to structure varied work-outs based on what our participants want and need. Hilda and Christina have partnered with Interfaith as volunteer instructors for over two years. Much of our success is due to their hard work in motivating others to exercise and leading exercise activities four times each week. Not only is their physical stamina impressive, their desire to give back to the community is evident in their commitment to showing up for classes no matter the weather. Both women also spend a great deal of time working up exercise routines and finding new and motivational music for classes. The UNO students will also work with Hilda and Cristina to train additional volunteers to serve as exercise instructors. Several of our evening participants have expressed an interest in learning how to organize and lead classes and want to train to be able to do so.

We are enthused about this partnership with the UNO and welcome the energy and ideas of the graduate students as they help us in our ministry!

Virginia McGill, Interfaith

“Our mental and emotional diets determine our overall energy levels, health and well-being more than we realize. Every thought and feeling, no matter how big or small, impacts our inner energy reserves.”

Doc Childre, The HeartMath Solution





Everlasting Arms

*The God Who lives forever is your safe place.
His arms are always under you.*

New Life Version, Deuteronomy 33:27

Many of you know I have been a little stressed out since Pastor is on Sabbatical. The computer keeps acting up, a funeral needed to be planned and I had to find someone to officiate, questions from the congregation, people calling looking for pastor, transients looking for help, and other responsibilities that I am not accustomed to having crowd my desk and my mind. I have bounced between feeling overwhelmed and incapable of handling everything to an attitude of working on thanking God for each new experience He sends my way. This morning, I had the privilege of sharing devotions and prayer with Brenda, the Kids at Work, After School and Director of Youth and Fun staff person. Because of the many changes in staff hours, no one had been around for the past few weeks to have that fellowship time with. I didn't realize how much I missed it until this morning when I was able to share with Brenda. I have been reading "Strengthen My Spirit" by Charles Spurgeon which are his sermons from the 1880's divided up into daily devotions. I am constantly amazed at how appropriate his thoughts are for contemporary living. This morning's devotional was exactly what I needed. The title I read this morning was "The Everlasting Arms"

"The Christian may be sinking under trouble through fierce conflict, but even then he cannot be brought so low as to be beyond the reach of the "everlasting arms"- they are underneath him: and while thus sustained, *all Satan's efforts to harm him avail nothing*. This assurance implies a promise of strength for each day, grace for each need, and power for each duty." (Charles Spurgeon, March 25)

Exactly what I need for each day! Just like the manna God provided the Israelites. Enough for one day at a time.

1. *The strength to make it through the day.* I have been going home exhausted because of the things I am trying to be wise about in connection with the ministry here at Grace during Pastor's absence. I want to honor what God is directing me to do and still be mindful of what Pastor would have chosen.
2. *The grace for each need.* It's hard to be graceful when you are conflicted about what you have to do. Words of grace don't flow from your mouth if you try to rely on your own resources to meet the needs of the people in your circle of ministry. Yes, my friends, we all have a circle of ministry that God has specifically chosen for each of us. It may be your family that God has chosen you to influence, or your neighbors and friends that need a word of grace from you. The promise is that under His "everlasting arms," the grace to be responsive to others flows from Him to us.
3. *The power for each duty.* When I read this phrase, I loved the word "power!" The feeling of powerlessness is crippling. If I feel powerless, then any decision or circumstance becomes impossible to live with. I spend wasted time mulling over the past or what to do because I don't tap in to the power provided to me to fulfill the duties I am called upon to do. Get it from the source! What is it? The absolute source is Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith...and so much more. His power is offered in every circumstance we, as committed believers, find ourselves in.

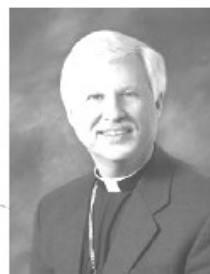
Another phrase I like in the quote is "all Satan's efforts to harm *you* will avail nothing." We are in a fight...a fight to do His will and not be distracted by Satan's efforts to thwart our ministry. Let's remind each other when life seems difficult, His arms are always underneath us and we can NEVER be brought lower than that.

Pam Reents, Editor



a child of God considers ...

from Bishop deFreese



Greetings dear friends!

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope, of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4: 4-6

"To Be the Church"

"We want you to know about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints – and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."

II Corinthians 8:1-5

The ice storm that devastated the central part of Nebraska impacted many of our people, our church-families, and the people they seek to serve in the name of Christ. I want to say "Thank you" to the faithful witness of our leaders who diligently ministered. Many of our congregations stepped forward in a variety of ways to express and extend the compassionate touch of Christ.

I have asked Pastor David Sites of Bethel Lutheran Church, Holdrege, to share what this experience meant to him. Bethel has a long, strong history of responding to the needs of others...it is a genuine partnership as they were lifted in a time of challenge.

Pastor Sites writes:

"The experiences of the recent ice storm reinforced my understanding and appreciation for what it means to be the Church. So often, we use that term to refer to our own local congregation or place of worship. In doing so our focus tends to be turned inward.

The response we in our area received as a result of the storm was truly a blessing beyond my greatest expectation. While folks in the rest of the state were gradually becoming aware of our plight here, the synod staff was working hard to get the word out. Particularly, calls from Bishop David deFreese and Communications Director, Linda Janssen Gjere, as to what the needs were and how best to respond were very helpful and supportive. Once the members across the Nebraska Synod became aware of the situation here, calls started coming to us. The response was a vivid reminder of what it means to be the Church. We are part of a caring community that goes beyond geographical boundaries. That realization made it so much better for us locally to get through a difficult time. We felt a power greater than ourselves surrounding and uplifting us through all of this.

I would not wish for anyone else to have to go through such an experience as this in order to realize how special it is to be part of the Church of Jesus Christ. Please know what a blessing it is to be connected as people of faith. There is something special about that relationship that does not occur in the same way in other relationships. That special relationship needs to be lifted up and not just when a disaster takes place.

Information about the magnitude of your caring and sharing has been shared in another story. On behalf of the folks in our area, again, I want to say "Thank you" for all that you have done to help us in our time of need. My encouragement to you is simply this – continue to be the Church and God will make wonderful things happen.

Our recent experience makes us aware that we are part of a larger community called the Church. On the next expression, we are members of the Nebraska Synod. The expression beyond that is our affiliation with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We tend to make those connections when there are issues raised that we have interests in or when we consider how much we wish to support those entities financially. Even then, there is more of a tendency to see them in terms of organization than fellow members of the Body of Christ. Of course, beyond those expressions, we have the Church universal, which consists of all who have responded to the good news of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Rarely, beyond missionary support, do we think in terms of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe. One almost has to experience God's people in a global setting in order to get the connection that exists. I have been blessed to have had that experience and reflect on it regularly.



Blessings,

Pastor David H. Sites,
Bethel Lutheran Church in Holdrege

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope, of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4: 4-6



April is

International Guitar Month
 Keep America Beautiful Month
 National Anxiety Month
 National Humor Month
 National Welding Month
 National Garden Month,
 Uh-Huh Month

You know you are addicted to coffee if ...

You grind your coffee beans in your mouth.

You sleep with your eyes open.

You have to watch videos in fast-forward.

You can take a picture of yourself from ten feet away...
 without using the timer.

Your eyes stay open when you sneeze.

You don't sweat, you percolate.

You walk twenty miles on your treadmill before you realize
 it's not plugged in.

Instant coffee takes too long.

You channel surf faster without a remote.

You have a picture of your coffee mug on your coffee mug.

You can outlast the Energizer bunny.

You short out motion detectors.

You don't even wait for the water to boil anymore.

You help your dog chase its tail.

You soak your dentures in coffee overnight.

Your first-aid kit contains two pints of coffee...
 with an I.V. hookup.

You haven't blinked since the last lunar eclipse.



Special Days in April at Grace Church

- ◆ April 1 - Palm Sunday
- ◆ April 3 & 17-
 On Being Lutheran Study
- ◆ April 5 - Maundy Thursday
 Dinner at 6:00 p.m.
 Service at 7:15 p.m.
- ◆ April 6 - Good Friday
 Service at 7:15 p.m.
- ◆ April 8 - Easter
 Sunrise Service 6:30 a.m.
 Breakfast - 7:30 a.m.
 Late Service - 10:30 a.m.
- ◆ April 20 & 21 -
 Joint Confirmation Class
 at Cristo Rey.

Thanks, IRS!

A fine is a tax for doing wrong.

A tax is a fine for doing well.

Once Upon a Time...

A little girl asked her father,
 "Daddy? Do all Fairy Tales begin
 with Once Upon A Time?"

He replied, "No, there is a whole
 series of Fairy Tales that begin
 with 'If elected I promise...'"

Bad April Fool's Joke



DIGITAL CAMERA FOR SALE TO HELP PAY MEDICAL BILLS

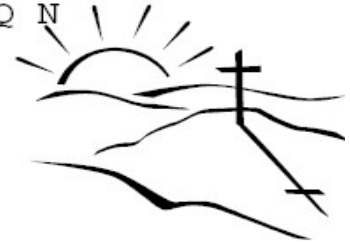
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CELEBRATE
CHURCH
CROSS
CRUCIFIXION
EASTER
FRIDAY
GOD
GOOD
HOLY

JESUS
LAMB
LENT
LILY
PALM
RESURRECTION
RISEN
SAVIOUR
SOUL
SUNDAY



Courtesy of Songs 4 Teachers© www.songs4teachers.com

Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign!

At a Towing Company:

We don't charge an arm and a leg. We want tows.

Door of a plastic surgeon's office:

Hello. May we pick your nose?

In a farmer's field:

The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free,
but be aware that the bull charges.

Outside a farm:

Horse manure, pre-packed bags, \$10. Or, do-it-yourself, \$1.

In a veterinarian's waiting room:

Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!

On a church door:

This is the gate of Heaven. Enter ye all by this door.

((This door is kept locked because of the draft. Please use side entrance))

On a desk in a reception room:

We shoot every 3rd salesman, and the 2nd one just left.

