

St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
2315 "I" Street  
Omaha, NE 68107-1814  
402-733-5881

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**MAY SUNDAY EVENTS**  
9:30 am. Worship Service  
St. Luke's, 2815 I Street

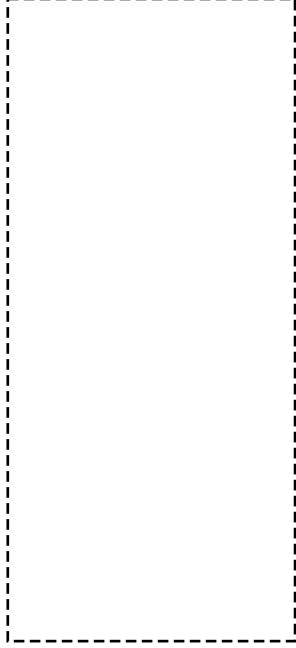
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Damon D. Laaker  
Editor/Church Secretary St. Luke's - Nancy Klusaw  
Editor/Church Secretary Grace - Brenda Spahr  
Sexton - Alma Lopez

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St. Luke's  
**Echo**

1905 - 2024

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MESSENGER

1889 - 2024

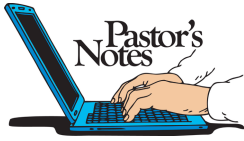


May Worship Services will be held at St. Luke's Lutheran, 2315 I Street



With love to reach out, to serve,  
to welcome all in the name of  
our Lord Jesus.

**Connect with us on the web: [stlukesomaha.org](http://stlukesomaha.org)  
[graceluth.com](http://graceluth.com)**



I was delighted over a month ago when Moses Loda, an Elder in the Mabaan Sudanese Worshipping Community asked when they might have a joint celebration with the Grace worshipping community. I shared with him in brief my schedule. A short while later, John Boato asked much the same thing. Now, two weeks ago, Moses checked with me to see if I was going to be at worship on Sunday, April 14. I said, yes, I would be. I knew that there had been some talk about thanking me for serving the Mabaan Community but little did I know what they had planned.

Sunday, April 14, arrived and I was delighted to see some of the Mabaan families that I hadn't seen in awhile. This is nice, I thought. Then Moses arrived and shortly thereafter John Boato. Barnabas had called me the night before and said that they would have some clothes for me and Mary. He didn't elaborate. So, I wondered what that meant.

Following worship, they handed us a bag with clothes in it. Please put these on, they said. Well, as you can see in the pictures, these were some very elaborate clothes. It took two of the women and a couple of the men to tell us how to put these clothes and many adornments on. In fact they had to help tie the arm bands and head bands.



We were then presented to the group. We were invited to sit in the upholstered chairs because they had some things they wanted to say. John Boato stood up and began by saying that he had prepared a few words. He began by reading Psalm 133 and then he said: "We have decided and requested this time to come together, just simply to say thank you. And appreciate what you have done with us in all these years. It has been 22 years together in Christian fellowship. Evangelical-Lutheran-Church. You not just opened the door to the building, but you are open minded and open heart. You have assisted in many different ways of serving. We don't find so many people in this world like this, but you're one of them. I wish the Bishop, one greater for (Nebraska Synod) ELCA was here, so I can tell him that, this is the Man has done a lot for

*Continued...*

the mission of Jesus Christ, but your good deeds will be rewarded in heaven by Jesus. You have assisted in things like, Green card applications, Habitat housing, the church had supported Pastor Joseph Lal education in Ethiopia, supported Leeka Church for roofing. So many other things. We have come here today to appreciate your kindness and honor you with a little gift we have, it is the beads, beads in Mabaan culture it means a lot, for someone has done something good, and when they celebrate with them. We are happy for you Pastor Damon. I'm so thankful, and grateful for your service. God Will continue to bless you and your family. Thank you. We will continue to work together in this partnership in Christ, as iron sharpening each other, so we are.

Introduction to the new Church leaders.

Moses Faya Loda, Charles Lewo Tuw, John Sanduk Boato, Barnaba Peter Dyedi and Nenchi Ilka."

I am deeply honored by this expression of love and appreciation. This relationship has touched my heart and life in ways that goes beyond any expectation. It has been a joy to provide loving service in many different contexts and I thank God for providing me and the congregation this opportunity to grow in love and fellowship with the Mabaan Sudanese family.

Pastor Laaker







Additional photos from the celebration of friendship between the Mabaan Community and Grace for more than 22 years!

Great Food, Great Conversations and plenty of catching up!



### St. Luke's 2024 Council Members

Steve Braun	Annette Chipman	Frank Durham
Cindy Fleming	John Kolb	Dave Ruffner
Molly Sedlacek	Connie Tefft	Pastor Laaker

\*\*\*\*\*

Officers Serving the Congregation:  
 Treasurer: Nancy Klusaw  
 Financial Secretary & Memorial/Special Gifts: Rose Marie Lad

### Council Notes ~ April 4, 2024

Frank Durham called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Devotions: Pastor Laaker led devotions from Daily Texts – Isaiah 45:6-7 and Revelation 1:18

Agenda: Agenda was adopted by motion.

Minutes of March 14, 2024, meeting: Motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Motion carried.

Book Study: Chapter 1 of **Leading, Faithful, Innovation** was discussed. The chapter began with vignettes addressing the aspect that there are a greater number of persons who no longer attend church and yet have a longing for spirituality. At the end of the chapter, the authors address the question: What Difference Does the Gospel Make? They state: To the extent to which churches' primary messages to members and neighbors concentrate on institutional affiliation, participation, and support, they will continue to decline. To the extent to which they learn to join with those aspiring a deeper spirituality, listening and communicating the difference Jesus makes to those longings and losses, they will discover new connections, energy and hope.

Please read Chapter2, "Listen", for next month.

#### Unfinished Business:

1. Roof status: McKinnis Roofing will be contacting us soon.
2. Conversations with Grace and St. Luke's continue.
3. Synod Assembly Update: One opening is still available.

Continued.....

**Reports:**

Pastor's Report – A written report was provided. Pastor will be attending the Spring Voyagers gathering in DC next week.  
 President's Report – A written report was provided.  
 Treasurer/Finance Report – A written report was provided.  
 Financial Secretary's Report – A written report was provided.  
 Memorial Fund Report – A written report was provided.  
 Building and Grounds Report – An oral report was provided. Glass Masters (window) and McKinnis Roofing (roof) will be contacted.  
 Evangelism – An oral report was given. Sign on 24th Street continues to be changed.  
 Fellowship – No report.  
 Stewardship – No report.  
 Parish Education – No report. Sara Pahl-Ramirez continues to prepare articles for the newsletter.  
 Social Ministry – An oral report was given. "Love Your Newest Neighbor" items have been picked up by Refugee Empowerment Center & Immigrant Legal Center. September 8, 2024, is God's Work. Our Hands Sunday.  
 Worship and Music – An oral report was given. Hymn selection meeting will be held April 23, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.

Motion to accept all reports as presented was adopted.

**New Business:**

1. New Hope will no longer be meeting at St. Luke's on Fridays.

The next Council Meeting: Thursday, May 9, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.

The meeting closed with prayer at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Fleming  
- On behalf of Connie Tefft



*Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day.*

*1 Kings 8:28*

**Please keep in your prayers the individuals listed below who have health issues and concerns:**

Vicki Cox  
 June Hilmer  
 Samuel Mantzaris  
 Pam Reents  
 Rose Wynn



Terri Durham  
 Richard Krambeck  
 Carolyn Matson  
 Marilyn Van Ormer



**Pray for wisdom for your Church Council at Grace and St. Luke's Lutheran.**

Pray for the Council Members. Ask God to bless their ministry among us. Pray for strength and spiritual wisdom for the leaders in the local church and the Nebraska Synod:

Pastor Damon Laaker, St. Luke's and Grace Lutheran Churches  
 Bishop Scott Johnson, Nebraska Synod  
 Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, ELCA Bishop

Pray for the Sudanese community in general. Charles Tuw, Moses Loda, John Boato, Barnaba Dyedi and Nenchi Ilka are the elders for the Sudanese Worshiping Community.

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

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

Dolores Castro - Home  
 Vicki Cox - Home  
 Richard Krambeck - Trinity Villiage, Papillion  
 Dee Nielsen - Peyton, CO  
 Rev. Terry Nielsen - Echo Hills  
 Jeri Swanson - Hillcrest Estates  
 Marilyn Van Ormer - Home  
 Doris Westman - Hillcrest Estates



All of our homebound enjoy receiving mail, if you would like to brighten their day, please call the church office for any addresses you need. Blessings!



## Grace 2024 Council Members

Ron Adrian      Barnaba Dyedi      Sarah Emery  
Arlone Farber      Greg Hula      Janet Hula  
Eva Martin      Andrea Spahr      Amanda Vazquez  
Pastor Laaker  
\*\*\*\*\*  
Officers Serving the Congregation:  
Financial Secretary: Janet Hula      Treasurer: Ralph Fitle

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Council Meeting Notes ~ April 16, 2024

**Call to Order:** Sarah called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**Gathering of Prayers:** We ask for prayers for peace in the world, for individuals specific healings, recent accident victims across the state, prayers of thanks for the nice rain we got today.

**Devotions:** Devotions were led by Pastor Laaker, reading the selected verses in the “Daily Texts” from Psalm 18:28 and Luke 1:78-79. The first tells us that God lights up the darkness and offers hope. The second reminds us that God’s light will lead us from the darkness into the way of peace.

**Visions for Ministry:** Leading Faithful Innovation by Dwight Zscheile, Michael Binder and Tessa Pinkstaff. Chapter One began with vignettes addressing the aspect that there are a greater number of persons who no longer attend church and yet have a longing for spirituality. At the end of the chapter, the authors address the question: What Difference Does the Gospel Make? They state: To the extent to which churches’ primary messages to members and neighbors concentrate on institutional affiliation, participation, and support, they will continue to decline. To the extent to which they learn to join with those aspiring a deeper spirituality, listening and communicating the difference Jesus makes to those longings and losses, they will discover new connections, energy and hope. Read Chapter 2 for next month.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the regular March 2024 meeting of the council were accepted as presented.

**Financial Secretary’s Report:** The report of the Financial Secretary, Janet Hula, was presented and accepted by motion.

**Treasurer’s Report:** The report of the Treasurer, Ralph Fitle, was presented and accepted by motion.

**Mission Share:** The monthly Mission Share contribution and San Andres contribution were both made in March – ending with 100% of our pledge for both.

### **Committee Reports**

**Christian Education:** Christian Education does not plan to host VBS this summer.

**Evangelism/Outreach:** Crossroads Connection - great turnout, upbeat and grateful group of folks. Very enjoyable. Will plan to do this again in September. Pastor Edgar offered to bring Tamales for that time.

**Finance:** Safe Deposit cost went up to \$80, opened an MIF CD and FNBO CDs, received letter from insurance company saying deductible is going up to \$5,000.

**Property:** South Double Door Light, Mowing, Fertilizing.

**Service/Social Ministry:** Habitat GWOH Build - partners in faith build at Blue Stem development (Sorenson & 57th) Saturday, Sept 7th or 14th. Would we want to participate in a partnership build? Gods Work Our Hands is Sunday, September 8th.

Immigrant Legal and Refugee Empowerment Center sent a thank you for the items we collected last month for them.

**Support/Stewardship:** Quarter Contribution Letters have been prepared.

**Worship:** Hymn Selection is next week.

Need to replace a part of the electrical board for the organ to fix some of the issues our organists have been experiencing.

**Unfinished Business:** We encourage ongoing conversations with St. Luke’s about our ministry direction.

**New Business:** None

**Announcements:** Pastor thanked Barnabas for his part in the special recognition from the Mabaan Community received Sunday, April 14. Gathering on Sunday, April 21, for Bobby Kent, who used to stop in and play the piano in the fellowship hall. Arlone will provide a prayer in May.

**Adjournment:** The Council meeting closed in prayer and adjourned at 8:34pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Amanda Vazquez, Secretary

*Continued...*





## Stewardship

When we give faithfully and generously, we demonstrate God's redeeming grace that is alive and well within us. Because of God's grace, we are empowered to give. Our giving is a spiritual response to God out of gratitude for all that God has done for us. Giving in response to God's love should be our primary motive for giving. Giving to meet our church's budget is important, but it should not be our primary reason for giving. Through the giving of our first and best to the Lord, we worship and honor God.

1611 1/2 Farnam Street  
Omaha, NE 68102

**Hours for Breakfast and Lunch**  
**Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri & Sat. from 7 - 2**  
**Closed: Wed and Sun**

**TABLE GRACE**  
**C A F E**

Nourishing Hungry Bodies and Souls

Grace Lutheran received a letter from Table Grace which read:

Pastor Damon & Grace Lutheran Endowment,

Thank you for your continued support (\$7,500) toward the work of Table Grace! We hope you can join us for Table Grace the Musical! Blessings, Simone & The Table Grace team!

The Table Grace Musical is currently rehearsing for performances which will be held as follows:

Scottish Rite Center, 202 South 20th Street, Omaha, 402-342-1300.  
Performance Dates: June 21-22 at 7:00 pm.

Benson Theatre, 6054 Maple Street, Omaha, 402-991-4333.  
Performance Dates: June 27-29 at 7:00 pm.

Lofte Theatre, 15841 Manley Road, Manley NE, 402-234-2553.  
Performance Dates: August 8-9 at 7:00 pm.



For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10



Thank you Mary for your weekly dedication running the recording equipment every Sunday during worship service.

Thank you Donna & Ron Adrian and Brenda Spahr for taking care of the altar, and preparing communion.

Thank you Jean, Rod, Robin and Miriam for sharing your music ministry with us and providing beautiful music during worship services!

Thanks to everyone that helped with worship services during the month of April. It is much appreciated.

Thank you Rose Marie for your willingness to help out in the office while Nancy was on vacation, it is greatly appreciated.

Thank you Janet, Eva, Bob, Connie, Rose Marie, Ron, Donna, and John, for your faithful dedication in helping assemble the monthly combined newsletter!

Thank you to all those that help keep both church grounds neat by picking up trash around the churches.

Thank you Alma for keeping both Grace and St. Luke's clean and so welcoming to everyone who enters.

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



**Mother's Day Brunch**  
**May 12, 2024**



Following worship service all are invited to stay and enjoy a light Mother's Day Brunch! A wonderful way to celebrate the Moms in our lives with fellowship, food and conversations!

# St. Luke's

## Birthdays

- 1 – William Ludwig
- 4 – Connie Tefft
- 7 - McKinnon Carlson
- 11 - Christine Kilzer
- 15 - Rose Wynn
- 17 - Amber Retzlaff
- 17 - Joseph Peirce
- 19 - Sharon Palmer
- 21 - Steve Braun
- 25 - Michael Carlson
- 26 - Cynthia Creasy



## Anniversaries

31 - Larry & Karen Chapman 55

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Please contact the church office and let us know!

Happy Birthday in faith! May blessings be upon you! On your birthday, remember that you were wonderfully made by God and rejoice in God's love. You are so blessed to be you and to share the amazing love of Jesus on your birthday! May God bless this day with more love than your heart can hold.



St. Luke's Mary Circle will meet on Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 9:30 am in the Educational Unit for fellowship and Bible Study. Jane Nodean will have devotions, Janet Hula the lesson and Karen Chapman will serve as hostess. Everyone is welcome to come join in the learning, conversation and refreshments.

"Joyfulness keeps the heart and face young. A good laugh makes us better friends with ourselves and everybody around us."

~ Orison Swett Marden, via Joseph Basehart, Aurora, CO

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"My prayer for you: May your day be as special as you are. May God's love shine bright on you."

~ via Rev. John & Joy Nesbitt, Myerstown, PA

# Grace's

## Birthdays

- 5 – Lucas Gaunt
- 7 – Christi Edwards  
James Harrahill
- 8 – Ellison Simon
- 10 – Juan Vazquez
- 16 – Marissa Halfhill
- 21 – Jessica Armstrong
- 22 – Parsila Dike
- 25 – Arlone Farber
- 26 – Estir Lewa
- 27 – Brenda Adrian  
Donna Adrian



## Anniversaries

- 24 – Arun & Bobbi Pankaj 16
- 27 - Tom & Sarah Emery 24

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Please contact the church office and let us know!

Lutheran Women of Omaha  
Tuesday, May 14, 2024  
12:00 Noon



Join us at Bethel Lutheran Church, 1312 South 45th Street

Cost: \$7.00

Guest speaker is Eilene Wurth, Author, *Women Who Built Omaha*. Free will offering will benefit Omaha Public Library Foundation.

Call Mardelle Gocek at 402-292-1328 by Sunday, May 12th, to reserve your seat.

## PATH ASSIST

Path Assist, now available in your area, connects you to the resources you need to be healthy and improve the quality of your life. The Path Assist program is designed to help you confidently navigate local health and social service resources and advocate for your needs. The goal of Path Assist is to help you address issues like housing, food, transportation, access to medicine, isolation, and more before they become serious problems. Path Assist is a free program, you can sign up on their website at: [www.path-assist.com/gethelp](http://www.path-assist.com/gethelp) or call 402-265-6551.



Invite family and friends to our free in-person and virtual events

Save a tree. Plant a tree. Paper shredding events and fundraisers.

**Bellevue** | Saturday, May 18, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Thanksgiving Church, 3702 370 Plz.

**Omaha** | Saturday, June 22, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Salem Baptist Church, 3131 Lake St; benefitting the Salem Food Pantry

One best practice to protecting yourself from identity theft is shredding papers with personally identifiable information. The Thrivent Member Network - Nebraska Region has coordinated several contactless drive-thru shredding events to assist you in securely shredding your sensitive papers.

Just by participating, you will be making a difference three-fold:

- The Thrivent Member Network-Nebraska Region is supporting the [Arbor Day Foundation](#) to plant two trees in Nebraska's National Forest on behalf of each person that participates in our scheduled paper shredding events.
- Thrivent will make a \$10 donation for each vehicle that participates to the highlighted nonprofit of each event. Maximum of \$750 will be donated to each nonprofit.
- Plus, know that your sensitive documents will be properly shredded on-site by Paper Tiger Shredding. Reduce waste in the landfills and reduce your chances of identity theft.

Please note: Drive-thru on-site shredding will be located in the assigned parking lots.

Four bankers boxes allowed per vehicle. No tissue, newspaper, cardboard, magazines, or plastic allowed. Staples, paper clips, rubber bands, and folders are all acceptable.

**One-liners via United Methodist Pastor Karl R. Kraft of Dover, DE:**

“Don’t ruin a good today by thinking about a bad yesterday. Let it go.”

“Wisdom is knowing some of the best days have not happened yet.”

“When it rains, look for rainbows; when it’s dark, look for stars.”

“Adopt the 5x5 rule - if it won’t matter in five years, don’t spend more than 5 minutes worrying about it.”

*reprinted with permission from JoyfulNoiseletter.com*

**BIBLE STUDY** It's spring! It's Easter! Today's a blue sky day with flowers popping up and vigorous. Irises, tulips, and wild violets sing. Thanks

be to God!

Our study focuses on Psalm 22, one used during Good Friday services. Two of the Gospel writers quote Jesus, at the end of the crucifixion, crying out the Psalm's first words. ..."My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That sounds like despair, doesn't it? But this is Jesus, our Savior. I have read that when a biblical Jew spoke the first line of a Psalm, he was understood to be praying the whole thing. A footnote in Matthew reads, "A cry of real distress, but not of despair: this lament which Jesus takes from the scriptures is a prayer to God and is followed in the Psalm by an expression of joyful confidence in final victory "



Questions about Psalm 22:

1. Which two Gospel writers quote the Psalm? (Hint: not John)
2. In verses 4 and 5 of the Psalm, what attitude is expressed?
3. How did God respond?
4. How do people treat the psalmist?
5. In what verses does the psalmist show a tender, maternal image of God?
6. Verses 25 and 26 say what?

Sara welcomes comments and questions at: 402-686-1693.



**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**Thursday, June 6, 2024**  
**10:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Volunteers Assisting Seniors will be at Grace Lutheran Church on Thursday, June 6, 2024 to help fill out your Homestead Exemption Application. This service is free. **Event is by appointment only. Please call the Volunteers Assisting Seniors office at 402-444-6617 to schedule your appointment.**

Our Mission: Empowering seniors with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their benefits.

For additional information visit our website at: [vas-nebraska.org](http://vas-nebraska.org)





Grace Lutheran and St. Luke's have some additional ways that you could contribute without spending any out of pocket funds.

Take a few moments of your time to download the app for **TAGG - Together A Greater Good**; they partner with several community business. Take a snapshot of your receipt and some businesses will donate 5% to a charity of your choice ~ either St. Luke's or Grace.

Register your **Bakers Plus card** with Kroger and choose Grace or St. Luke's as your charitable choice!

**Ronald McDonald House:** Save your pop tabs. They use the proceeds to pay the utilities. A box is provided in the back of the sanctuary for the tabs. Our most recent contribution of pop tabs brings our total to 129,000.

**Eye Glasses.** Do you have old eye glasses that you no longer use? A box is located in the back of the sanctuary to place them. They will be given to the Lion's Club to be used for individuals in need.



**The United Nations World Food Programme recently warned that acute food insecurity has reached an unprecedented high, affecting a record 349 million people — up from 135 million in 2019.** That is a shocking statistic. ELCA World Hunger partners here in the United States and around the world are telling us about the financial strain caused by the rising hunger crisis, and we come to you humbly, **asking for a donation.**

Through ELCA World Hunger you support families as they address root causes of hunger and poverty through such multifaceted solutions as education, agricultural training and microloans for women. Our faith calls us to be in relationship with our neighbors, and that is what makes your partnership so important.



## Loaves and Fishes Pantry

Grace Lutheran Church  
1326 South 26th Street  
402-341-7730

**Pantry is Open 10:00 - 11:00 am  
Every Monday ~ Even Holidays!**

Variety of fresh foods donated by  
Trader Joe's and Whole Foods.

The Pantry continues to reach out to those in need on a weekly basis. Clients of the Loaves and Fishes Pantry are asked to park along Poppleton Street. Participants are then directed through the alley to pick up prepared sacks and bags of much needed food items. **The Pantry is in need of clean plastic grocery bags and paper grocery sacks!** Please continue to keep the Pantry and all the work that is done in your prayers. *All are served with love and care.*

Do you know of a family or individual in need of food assistance?  
Please share the Pantry information with them.

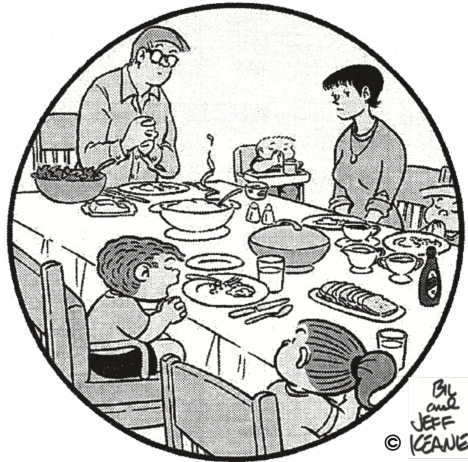
There is a variety of volunteer opportunities for anyone interested.  
Call the church office for additional information.

**Lutheran South Pantry**  
4401 South 23rd Street ~ 402-502-7070



Items that clients cannot purchase with their food stamps are always appreciated: Dish Soap, Kleenex, Bar Soap, Deodorant, Toothbrush and toothpaste, Feminine hygiene products, Hair products (combs, brushes, picks), Bathroom tissue, Shampoo, Dry Laundry Soap, Hand Sanitizer, Diaper wipes, and Diapers, especially sizes 6 and pull-ups.

**We always need paper or plastic bags.**



"...and bless the hands that repaired this food."

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"Just checking in on you since we can never find you at church anymore."

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### Gardening God's Way

Plant five rows of peas:

- Preparedness*
- Promptness*
- Perseverance*
- Politeness*
- Prayer*

Then, plant five rows of lettuce:

- Lettuce be faithful*
- Lettuce be unselfish*
- Lettuce be loyal*
- Lettuce be truthful*
- Lettuce really love one another*

Next to them, plant four rows of squash:

- Squash gossip*
- Squash indifference*
- Squash criticism*
- Squash selfishness*

No garden should be without turnips:

- Turn up for church*
- Turn up with a smile*
- Turn up with determination*
- Turn up with anticipation*

To conclude our garden, we must have thyme:

*Thyme for God, Thyme for study, Thyme for prayer*

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.

*There is abundance in your garden... Because you reap what you sow.*

(Author unknown. There are many versions of this poem, and we have compiled just a portion here.)



### Mothers in the Bible



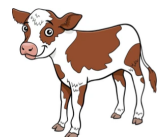
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 J D O R C A S M A R T H A N W L B K U A M M V S  
 L O I S E I D L E A H I A N N A Y K J D T Z W F  
 Y W J O E M S S A R A H Z E A K P B F S D S R G

BATHSHEBA	ELISABETH	ABIGAIL	BERNICE	CLAUDIA
REBEKAH	ZERUIAH	DORCAS	ESTHER	EUNICE
HANNAH	MARTHA	RACHEL	ZIBIAH	DINAH
GOMER	HAGAR	NAOMI	SARAH	TAMAR
ANNA	LEAH	LOIS	MARY	RUTH

### God's kids say & do the funniest things

A Sunday school teacher read to her third-graders the story of the Prodigal son. Then, to test how they had paid attention, she asked, "Who was unhappy at the return of the Prodigal son?"

One lad in the back raised his hand and shouted: "The fatted calf!"





Every childhood should be filled with warm memories and playful days ... a life of wonder, possibility, love and joy. Childhoods like the ones you most likely might remember.

Instead, over the past decade, we've seen the childhoods of so many of our young neighbors filled with war, famine, natural disaster and heartache. Their toys lay strewn across broken roads covered in debris, their homes have been reduced to ruin and rubble, and their days of carefree play outside are gone.

**Their childhoods have been interrupted.** Your compassion is critical to restoring joy to children's lives.

... children like **Diana Yurchenko**, whose little world was turned upside down when Russian troops invaded her homeland of Ukraine. Diana was enjoying a fun visit to her grandparents' house when the war broke out. It began like any normal visit you may have had with your grandchildren or grandparents.

One minute, Diana was being lovingly spoiled by her grandfather and her grandmother, Lidia. **Moments later, her grandparents were using their bodies as human shields to protect little Diana from shrapnel.**

One day, Russian soldiers invited residents to come out of hiding to receive supplies. Because Lidia needed food and medicine for her granddaughter, who she loves so much, she took the risk.

Yet "just two hours later, shells and cluster bombs started to fall, and many people were wounded there," Lidia said. She and her husband barely escaped.

After this horrifying attack, they fled their home to the forest. There, they hid in the basement of a ranger cabin — living off the land and donations from people in the town — until they received word their town was liberated and returned home.

Sadly, this false sense of freedom was short-lived. The very next day, there was a massive explosion in their yard. Lidia felt the great responsibility of keeping her granddaughter safe. "I couldn't hold it [together] any longer," Lidia shared. "I started crying and said, 'I can't go through this anymore.'"

You can imagine the heavy burden Lidia carries as she worries for the safety of her granddaughter. And feel the fear young Diana has every day, wondering if her world will ever be safe again.

Thankfully, Lidia, her husband and Diana fled to a safe haven where Diana can rest her head peacefully at night — without the threat of bombs. She can also participate in art therapy programs with other children who experienced the trauma of seeing horrific violence and feeling unimaginable heartbreak at such a young age.

*Continued.....*

By sharing your blessings today, you provide safe shelter, warm meals and therapy services for children like Diana and their families who are traumatized.

**Your love is reaching your neighbors in need no matter how far...**

...like young Micael in Peru. Micael also lives under the love and care of his grandparents who worried they couldn't provide him with enough nutrient-rich food to give him a healthy start to life or teach him valuable lifesaving skills like farming.

Yet, thanks to generous and caring people, like you, who want children to have bright futures and happy childhoods, Micael's grandparents were able to learn sustainable ways of growing food, raising livestock and earning an income.

His grandmother, Eusebia, is thankful for your support, which has transformed their lives. "I feed my children, myself," Eusebia said. "The same in the greenhouse. I have my food, my chard, my spinach, my lettuce ... My hen is the same way. I sell eggs. I feed my children. That's how I live."

Your generosity helped Micael's grandparents lift themselves out of poverty and bring joy and hope for a bright future into his young life.

**No child should ever have to battle hunger like Micael or violence like Diana... but sadly, young Aichata's childhood is being interrupted by both.**

She and her family were forced to flee violence in their hometown to live in the Segou Region of Mali. But their move to find safety has brought nothing but pain and tragedy. Aichata's only brother died, and her mother is suffering from a debilitating illness that traditional healers in the area can't treat.

With her mom often unable to work, Aichata and her sisters go hungry and aren't growing properly due to the lack of nutrient-rich food. **"When the children don't get food, they get sick ... I have to then rely on God," said Aichata's mother.**

Will you be the answer to their prayers?

Your giving heart allows children like Diana, Micael and Achiata the chance to feel the joy of childhood — just like the children in your life that you love so much.

Together, we will persist until your love reaches every neighbor.

