



The Friendly Visitor

Grace Lutheran Church

February 24, 2015

Sunday Services

8:15 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Educational Hour 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Lenten Worship Services

6:30 p.m through March 25

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Cold and Ashes

If you stop and think about it, having a below zero wind chill on Ash Wednesday is kind of fitting. Don't take that to mean that I like it. I don't. It is cold. As soon as you step outside you are reminded that you're alive, mainly because your very bones and joints yell at you for going outside! It is downright miserable out there, and maybe that is what makes it so fitting. The cold serves as a reminder of our being human, and in doing so, of our own mortality. It reminds us that we are fragile, and that we are in need of more than just ourselves to survive in this world. We need warmth.

Enter Ash Wednesday, a day marked with the aftermath of fire. It serves as a reminder of our human condition, that we are dust and that to dust we shall return. It is a reminder that is forged in fire. After the flames are gone, these ashes emerge, and when mixed with oil, they can be formed into a paste that not only serves as a reminder of death, but also a sign of life in the cross. We take these burned palm branches, consumed by fire, and turn them into a reminder of the new life that exists in and through the cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is something profound about the way that the cold and the fire mix on a day like this. The paradox holds in it what it is to be human. There are times of cold, times of flame, and everything in between. Yet through it all, we are children of promise. We are claimed with the sign of the cross. Whether it is in the waters of baptism, in snow, ice, or ashes, we are marked and sealed, claimed as a beloved child of God. That is truly a beautiful and sacred thing.

Yet, on an Ash Wednesday like this, I cannot help but be held in another tension of the day. As the cold serves as a reminder for me of my own dependence on God, and shelter, and a furnace, it also reminds me of the many who are without shelter. As the ashes serve as a reminder of the death and life that await me, I am reminded of those without the warmth of a fire or a furnace. I am able to stay inside and stay warm. Others are not. They too are marked with the cross of Christ. They too are claimed as a child of God. Yet those very things that serve as a reminder for me are the very things that become threats to his or her life.

Before we gather in worship here at Grace Lutheran Church, we will gather together at a simple soup supper. To some, having soup for supper is a break from the normal full meal. Yet for many in the Des Moines metro, this soup supper would be more than he or she may eat throughout the whole day. Again, I find that what serves as a reminder to me, is so much more to someone else.

Throughout Lent we will be gathering funds to provide meals for those who are hungry, and slow cookers for those for whom healthy eating does not seem possible on a small budget. Our hope as a community of faith is to raise the funds to provide 2015 meals. I hope we are able to go far beyond this goal.

These projects will not feed everyone who is hungry, but we have the people and resources to be a beacon of Christ to some in need here in the metro area. Might you be willing to help a brother or sister in need?

Pastor Mike

Happy March Birthday

- 1 Mary Johansen
Rebecca Sonius
Kristen Snyder
- 2 Donald York
- 3 Renee Mulvihill
Matthew Heid
- 4 Kimberly Carballo
- 5 Brent Culp
Katherine Scholl
Dane Christensen
- 6 Pressly Reha
- 7 LaVonne Mitchell
- 8 Jack Chenoweth
- 10 Patty Flannery
Nadine Garcia
- 11 Tammy Hagerty
- 12 Jacquelyn Holmes
Andrew Keller
Rachael Bigg
- 13 Preston Lathrop
Hilary Woodhouse Farver
- 14 Sally Niffenegger
- 15 Bill R. Jensen
Evelyn Knudsen
Ann Warren
Lydia McCleary
- 17 Kathy Bowermaster
Beth Flannery
Melissa Swanson
Benjamin Honsey
- 18 Joann Jensen
Tom Selander
Robert Sauerman
Emma Ashton
- 19 Diane Westercamp
Haley Turner
- 20 Karen Taylor
- 21 Janet Kjellberg
Susan Miller
Angela Allen
- 22 Louie Anderson
- 23 Rick Harmon
- 24 Mary Jo McCleary
Beau Brindley
- 26 Ryan Nordeen
- 27 Stephanie Johnson
Sierra Carney
Zara Preston
- 28 Alexson Calahan
- 29 Sharon Schwemler
- 30 Kristin Medhurst
Curtis Chenoweth
- 31 Daniel Gutmann
Amy Ziska



Happy March Anniversary

- 5 – Gus and Kari Berven
- 15 – Sonny and Kristina Hutton
- 20 – Edward and Jane Ridnour
- 24 – Randy and Karen Taylor



Sympathy is extended

to the family of Connie Heuton on the death of her brother-in-law in Florida.



Ronald McDonald House

Raise money by saving pull tabs? How does that work? The Ronald McDonald house turns pull tab donations into money by selling the tabs to an aluminum recycling facility. Annually, the program in Des Moines raises around \$5,000. Trivia about pull tabs; it takes 1267 tabs to make a pound and each pound is sold for .42. The money raised goes toward the general Des Moines House budget.

Families with children receiving medical care in Des Moines have the opportunity to be supported by the Ronald McDonald House in several different ways. The House offers a home like setting for families to sleep, rest, prepare meals, launder clothes and get a respite from the hospital. Families with hospitalized children can also utilize the comforts offered there without staying in the house by gathering for meals or doing laundry. This very special place helps keep families together when a child is ill.

Tab collection has been going on at Grace for several years. There is a small house shaped box in the same room as the pop machine, on the counter. You can help support the programs at the house by removing your pull tabs and placing them in the tab house box. Lots of pop cans from our pop machine go in the recycle box without removing the tab. Pull the tab and help the House! If you collect them at home, bag them and put them on the counter next to the box for donation. They will be taken to the Ronald McDonald House.

Remember, it takes a lot of tabs to get to \$5,000. Won't you help by saving pull tabs?

Faithful People, Holy Lands 2015.

How big are the blocks of the temple? What color is the wilderness? What does the wind on the Sea of Galilee feel like? While we can learn a lot about Christ's life and death from scripture, there are a lot of details we can only know from first-hand experience.

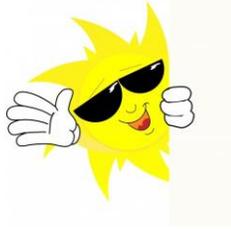


Here's your chance!

On **September 11-25, 2015**, members of the Southeastern Iowa Synod are making a pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine. Pastor Dan Kuckuck (St. Stephen, Urbandale) hosts this trip along with Monte Luker, Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Lenoir-Rhyne University and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. For more information, contact Pastor Dan Kuckuck ([515-276-4628](tel:515-276-4628) / dan@ststephenlutheran.org) or follow this link: http://www.icbs.org/find_trip/detail.aspx?tour=JC15/K&d=09-11-2015&group=55867

VBS News

Amidst the cold of winter, it's time to start thinking warm thoughts. Vacation Bible School is coming! Here are the dates, with additional information below about some exciting changes for this year:



PRESCHOOL

June 8-12 (Mon-Fri): Preschool VBS week for children ages 3-5 (potty trained)
9:00am-12:00pm with a family presentation on June 12 at 11:30am

Registration deadline: June 1 (or earlier if spaces fill)
Cost: FREE

ELEMENTARY AGE Option 1

***June 15-18 (Mon-Thurs): at St. Andrew's Episcopal
For grades K-5 (completed)
6:00-8:30pm

Registration deadline: June 8 (or earlier if spaces fill)
Cost: FREE

OR

ELEMENTARY AGE Option 2

June 22-26 (Mon-Fri.): at Grace for grades K-5 (completed)
8:30am-4:00pm (aftercare available until 4:30pm)
Family Night: June 25, 5:30pm

Registration deadline: June 15 (or earlier if spaces fill) for the program and aftercare

Cost: \$25 per child for the week for afternoons; free if morning only (scholarships available)

The starred week above is an elementary program option that will be offered at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church at 5720 Urbandale Ave. They were partners with us last year, and due to an extended waiting list for Grace's elementary week program in 2014, St. Andrew's Episcopal is offering an evening option to make more spaces available. Please note that due to limited space available, children may register for one elementary week only.

Additional exciting news is that we are also partnering with Lutheran Lakeside Camp during the week of June 22. At least three Lakeside staff will be an integral part of our program, and we are looking forward to working together.

Look for flyers and registration forms for children as well as volunteers in the Gathering Hall by March 1. Questions about the program or interested in volunteering? Contact Stephanie Johnson in the church office.

Book Review

The Only Necessary Thing

On display in the church library is Grace Lutheran's collection of author Henri Nouwen's books. The following is an insightful book review of one of his books written by Joanne Johnson, "The Only Necessary Thing; Living a Prayerful Life," compiled and edited by Wendy Wilson Greer. Thank you Joanne for writing this review.

Wendy Freer chose Henri Nouwen's writings on prayer from a number of his books and various writings. She gathered his texts on prayer and entered them into fifteen chapters in this book. The chapters have headings such as Solitude, Belovedness, Listening, Discipline, Forgiveness, Community, etc. All of the texts in these chapters are taken from his earlier works and the sources are listed after each excerpt.

Perhaps each person who reads this book will find a different chapter of great meaning. For me the ones that had the most impact came late in the book. The first is the chapter on prayer as the language of the Christian community; in our lives we need both individual prayer and the prayer life of the community and the two must not be separated.

The other theme that really impressed me is that prayer leads us into actions of service and compassion for the poor, the hungry, the sick, and the oppressed. Henri Nouwen tells us that in prayer we meet Christ and in him all human suffering. In service to the people we meet and give care, we meet the compassionate and suffering Christ.

The final chapter in this book is a collection of prayers; Henri Nouwen's hope is that in these prayers the cries of our own hearts will recognize the quiet prayer of God's spirit in our own halting and stuttering words. These prayers seek to express our longings and seeking of relationship with our God.

The final prayers in this book follow the church year so there is an Advent prayer, a Christmas prayer, a prayer for the New Year, Lenten prayers, Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost prayers.

I recommend this thoughtful and contemplative book on prayer.

-Joanne Johnson



NCAA Bracket Fundraiser

March Madness is approaching! Selection happens on March 15th. So, do you feel lucky? Local and regional charities hope so! We will hold the church pool again this year. There will be a \$5 entry fee and the winner will choose which charity will receive the pool monies. Last year, Jeff Farrell won and was able to give the \$290 pool to Marfan Foundation. So far we have given away a total of \$750 due to this annual charity!

To enter simply fill out a bracket and turn it in to the church office between Sunday, March 15 and 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, March 19 with the \$5 entry fee. You should also note your chosen charity when you turn in the bracket. Brackets will be available in the church office or you can print your own. You could also scan your bracket and send it to revschmidt@live.com Please either include cash, or make the check payable to Grace Lutheran Church with NCAA in the memo field.

Grace Lutheran Church Special Council Meeting

1-27-15 @ 7:00 PM

Present: Pastor Mike, Jay Wangerin, Kevin Drury, Stacie Holst, Eric Weber, Barbara Zimany, Don Peterson, Cathy Barks and Karri Brandsfield

Meeting was called to order by Kevin.

Election of new officers for 2014:

President: Kevin Drury
Vice President: Jay Wangerin
Secretary: Karri Brandsfield
4th Executive Committee Member: Eric Weber

Respectfully submitted,
Karri Brandsfield, Secretary

Finance Report – January Results

Financial results for January YTD are as follows:

- Pledged Offerings – Actual \$39,933, Budget \$36,792
- Other Income – Actual \$1,119, Budget \$1,812
- Expenses – Actual \$45,986, Budget \$43,256
- Net activity – Actual (\$4,934), Budget (\$4,652)

Actual net activity was comparable to budget due to offsetting variances. Offerings were above budget as certain full year pledges were received during the month. Expense activity was above budget. Overages in maintenance (Lift repair \$2,883 and fire dampers \$3,160) were offset by savings from the vacant Youth and Family position.

Hunger Appeals

There are a number of Hunger appeals happening right in our community this Lenten season.

Grace Lenten Hunger Appeal

All funds collected (including Quarters for Hunger) will go to DMARC. Special offering envelopes can be found in the Pews. Please make checks out to Grace Lutheran with Hunger Appeal on the memo line. If you place cash in the envelopes and want the donation credited to your year-end contribution statement, please write your name on the envelope.

DMARC \$10,000 Challenge Hunger Campaign

This third annual campaign runs from March 1-April 30. Every donation marked "Challenge Hunger" will be matched, 50 cents for the dollar up to a total of \$20,000 given. As this falls into the timeframe of the Grace Lenten Hunger Appeal, every dollar you donate at Grace will make a larger impact.

Peanut Butter Donations

For every 3 pounds of peanut butter sold at Des Moines HyVee stores between February 24 and March 2, one pound of peanut butter will be donated to the Food Pantry Network

LWR

Let's Fight Global Hunger with Lutheran World Relief

These weeks of Lent, we are focusing on having an impact on hunger locally. Through LWR, we can also ease *global* hunger. How? It boils down to three simple ways: 1.) Pray for LWR hunger relief programs and the people who participate in them, 2.) Purchase LWR Fair Trade coffee, chocolate and gifts. Fair trade pays the producers of products what their products are worth and allows them to improve their personal economies, including feeding their families. 3.) Make LWR quilts and kits. These items assist people who are in crisis around the world, who lack access to shelter and basic supplies. People in crisis are also hungry people.

From March 15 to 29, we will collect donations for Lutheran World Relief in addition to our local hunger drive. We will make kits during education hour on March 15th. We will pray for the work of LWR. Fair trade coffee, cocoa and tea are available for purchase year round in the hall between the church office and Grace Hall. Yellow envelopes will be in the pews and a display will be in the Gathering Hall. When you write a check, please make it out to Grace Lutheran Church and write LWR on the memo line. Place it in the offering plate, or bring it to the display or the church office during these weeks. Thank you for your generous support.

From the LWR committee: Beth Flannery, Helen Ringgenberg, Gail Peterson, Lois Slye, Lynn Niemuth, Mary Jo McCleary, Lori Fry, and Cathy Barks

Grace Kids Care is having a "SOUP"er fundraiser!

Sunday March 1st at noon, after second service, the friendly staff and parents of Grace Kids Care will be hosting a soup luncheon. We thought what a better way to promote this ministry of Grace! We have been open for 12 years and it is time to update you on what's been going on in our busy daycare and preschool. We will have some informative posters and craft displays. Hope to see you there!



Men in Mission Meeting

Thursday March 12 6:00 p.m.
With Special Guests from Immanuel Methodist Men

Plan to Attend

Easter Sunday Pancake Breakfast

Grace Lutheran Church

Grace Hall

7:00 to 10:00 AM



Free Will donation

Sponsored by The Men in Mission

A portion of the proceeds will go to Lutheran Lakeside Camp

Fun at the Shrove Tuesday Customs Forum!

Denny Rehder had music and videos playing as he wore a multi-colored Jester hat. Mary Helt handed out beads in Gold, Purple and Green, while explaining the meaning of the colors. Carol Woodruff led some adults through "Let's make a Deal" based on Shrove Tuesday Customs, while others made Mardi Gras Masks.



Sandy and Bobby Briggs at the Pancake Races



Ro Zimany and Bill Kallestad dash through the race while flipping pancakes.



The Merkwans return for a visit. Come again soon! Grace, Sherry and Sarah pictured with Stephanie Johnson.



King Cakes for all to taste.

March 2015, LSI Article and Story

During March's National Professional Social Work Month, we celebrate social workers and the difference they make by dedicating their lives to helping others! Social workers are found in all areas of our communities, helping struggling children, families and adults find resources, discover their own strengths and build healthier futures.

You make it possible for LSI's many social workers to bring hope to lowans who are struggling with mental illness, family crisis, addiction, poverty and many other challenges. Thank you for your support and prayers that fuel LSI's mission of responding to the love of Jesus Christ through compassionate service!

LSI is proud to be an affiliated social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Learn more at www.LSIowa.org and www.facebook.com/LSI.iowa.

"April is the best person I have ever worked with in her field."

The hard reality about parenting a child with a history of trauma is that as much as you want to find the right help, sometimes it's impossible to know where to look. Just ask Jill and her 15-year-old stepdaughter Sierra.

"Sierra has a history that a child shouldn't have to go through," she said. "We tried to seek help for her in several different places through therapists and institutions and various agencies."

When Sierra was discharged from a residential placement, Jill and her husband were nervous. They knew she wasn't ready to come home, but they felt they had exhausted all the options.

Fortunately, Jill had one last idea. She turned to someone she had known personally for years—April, an LSI social worker. "I can honestly say that April is the best person I have ever worked with in her field," Jill said.

LSI and April were different, Jill said. "We hit a lot of dead ends with agencies and people we called on for help," she said. "It was frustrating. You think, 'What are we going to do? Nothing is going to work for this kid.' When we got involved with LSI through April, she always got back to us. She always had a suggestion."

When their family faced a serious crisis last summer, Jill knew exactly who to call. "My husband and I were in Texas for a work trip," Jill said. "Sierra made some bad choices, and we were concerned about her safety and her caregiver's safety. Honestly, I don't know what we would have done if we hadn't had April getting us the help Sierra needed."

With April's support, the family made a plan to get Sierra in a safe place until they returned home. For Jill, April was a lifesaver. For April, it was simply life as usual at LSI. "We don't have an internal stop clock, date or time," she said. "We're constantly working through crisis situations. That's just who we are at LSI, and I think that makes us different."

From Allison Beebe on the ELCA Malaria Campaign Blog: (2/4/2015)

Malaria used to be a constant struggle for Peter and his extended family in Uganda. Lutheran World Federation, through a trained volunteer, Michael, called a VHT (Village Health Team member,) helped Peter and his family to learn about malaria prevention and control, and to access resources like nets, malaria testing and treatment.

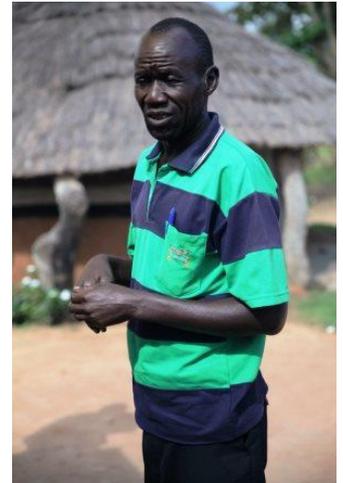


Photo: Peter's extended family

Peter says, "I am glad for the LWF malaria program. They helped us to get rid of malaria."

Peter's family is now equipped to stay healthy. They keep the area free of standing water that attracts mosquitoes, sleep under mosquito nets at night, and call Michael immediately when anyone starts to show symptoms of malaria.

Malaria cases are so reduced, Peter's newest grandchild, a baby girl, has lived her whole life malaria-free!

Hunger Facts

Only a fourth of Iowa children consume the recommended five + daily servings of fruit and vegetables.

In the past 30 years, the percentage of overweight children has tripled. One national study found that children from lower income households were more than twice as likely to be obese as children from higher income households.

Nearly 200,000 Iowa students K-12 qualify for free or reduced price meals through the National Lunch program – that is 40 % of students.

Those participating in Farm to School lunch programs list fresh fruits and vegetables as their favorite meal options.

**facts taken from Hunger in the Heartland by Debra Landwehr Engle*



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Connecting faith & finances for good.™

Thank you, Thank you Together we are making a difference through Thrivent Choice!

One act of generosity leads to another. And the impact grows. Thanks to members of Thrivent Financial, that's what we've experienced through the Thrivent Choice program. Many of you directed your designated 2014 Choice Dollars to **Grace Lutheran Church**. Through your individual recommendation, you have made a difference. Collectively, Thrivent Financial members contributed \$1,354 to help fund First Circle of Friends, pictorial directory and the Evangelism program. **Thank You** for your generosity and support of these three Grace ministries.

Direct Thrivent Choice Dollars by March 31:

Because giving back has always been important to Thrivent and its members, the Thrivent Choice program provides eligible participants the opportunity to help support the organizations you care about. Don't let your designated Choice Dollars expire. Eligible members of Thrivent Financial who have designated Choice Dollars: If you haven't already done so, be sure to direct your Choice Dollars by March 31, 2015. After that date, any undirected Choice Dollars will expire. Don't miss this opportunity to help support Grace Lutheran Church. You can go online to: www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice or call 800-847-4836 and state "Thrivent Choice". Thank You!!

Grace Garden

We are looking forward to warmer weather and have already started planning good things to grow and eat! Watch for information about us on the Photo Wall and upcoming newsletters. We would love to have you join us, even just to sit in on a meeting and hear what our plans are. The more who know what we are about, the more people who can spread the word that fresh produce is available in summer months.

In the meantime, please consider the Hunger Facts you are going to be reading in Grace Publications and some of the facts Rich Snyder spoke of in his recent Temple Talk. There are many people - from children to seniors - right here in Polk County who struggle with the quality of their meals and often, where their next meal is coming from. Now, take a look at your own pantry and fridge, and watch how much food (if any) gets wasted each week. While you cannot donate that food to the food pantries, you can start purchasing that much less and help your own budgets. Then, if you can, please donate to the Lenten Hunger Appeal for DMARC or the Food Bank. These months after Christmas, before the garden surpluses begin, are the time when donations to food banks drop off drastically. Every donation counts, no matter how small. Thank you.

Grace Fellowship Meeting

March 1 @ 5:00 PM which includes a light supper and entertainment from Merle Hay Mall discussing with us past, present (activities and changes), and future at the Mall.



Lenten Devotional Signup

Devotions will be emailed twice a week through Lent beginning Ash Wednesday. If you are already on the Devotional e-list, you're all set! If you would like to be added to the list, please email Michelle at vvoelker1@mchsi.com.

The devotions will also be posted on the Grace website, and printed copies will be available in the Gathering Hall at Volunteer Central.

The synod is also offering a series of daily Lenten reflections. Go to www.seiasynod.org/lent for a quick resource for study, contemplation, and prayer around three faith practices: fasting, praying, and giving.

**Cinnamon Roll Sunday
and Daylight Savings Time!
March 8**

Setting our clocks ahead isn't usually fun, but with Cinnamon Roll Sunday you'll be able to sleep in a little later, and then enjoy fresh warm cinnamon rolls during the Sunday School/Forum hour! No mess, no clean-up!
The free-will offering goes into the Youth and National Youth Gathering Fund, which helps send Grace high school youth to the National Youth Gathering, which will be this summer in Detroit.

**Garage and Plant Sale
Saturday May 3!**

- Save the date!
- Start your Spring Cleaning to save for the Garage Sale!
- Fill out the Plant sale Form in this newsletter (or on the website by March 1) and return by March 29.
- Watch for more information in March and April!
All funds raised helps to send Grace high school youth to the National Youth Gathering, which will be this summer in Detroit.

The Friendly Visitor

Grace Lutheran Church

2015 Easter Flowers

This Easter, celebrate the joyous good news of Christ's resurrection by purchasing an Easter lily to decorate the altar. They are \$12.75 each. Order forms will also be available in the church office and the bulletins on March 1 and March 8. The deadline for ordering is Tuesday March 10. Payment and the order form needs to be received by the office no later than this date to assure your request gets ordered.

Indicate on the order form if you would like the plant delivered to a homebound member. Otherwise, you may pick up your plant after the 10:45 a.m. service on Easter. Some plants aren't picked up, so please considering giving your plant to one of our homebound members. Volunteers will happily deliver these and they are enjoyed so much!

The deadline for ordering is Tuesday, March 10.

Please make my order

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Given by _____

(Quantity) ____ Lily @ \$12.75 each

____ Flowering Plant @ \$12.75 each

↑ Check this box if you want your plant delivered to a home bound member.

.....

IMPORTANT: THIS SECTION MUST BE COMPLETED

Method of Payment: Check ↑ Cash ↑

Amount of payment _____ Check number _____

Please make your check to Grace Lutheran Church. Payment must accompany the order. Place order in the offering plate or mail to the church office.

Please pick up your plant following the 10:45 Easter service.

Payment and ordering form must be received in the office by Tuesday, March 10.