

# *The Grace Greeter!*

**Grace Lutheran Church 2225 Washington Lincoln, NE 68502  
May 2020**

The Day Before Easter 2020 at Grace

It was Saturday afternoon. I stopped in to arrange sweet smelling and beautiful lily and tulip plants under the church lounge “screen”, in preparation for the afternoon recording of virtual Easter Sunday service. Virtual services- the new norm.

I stepped in the main sanctuary to collect a few supplies I would need for my project. I found the sanctuary frozen in time- including purple paraments yet in place! A sanctuary and hymn board stuck on the 3rd Sunday of Lent. Thinking back, that was the last time we were physically together as a congregation before pandemic lockdown hit! Sunshine was seen streaming through gorgeous stained glass windows, but there was no bustle of Grace members cheerfully readying flowers, candles, banners, butterflies, and white paraments, in preparation for a big Easter Sunday celebration. The balcony was eerily quiet- no shiny bells, choir, or instrument readying for a busy tomorrow. The special Easter communion wine sat sealed on the sacristy counter, waiting patiently to share together again.

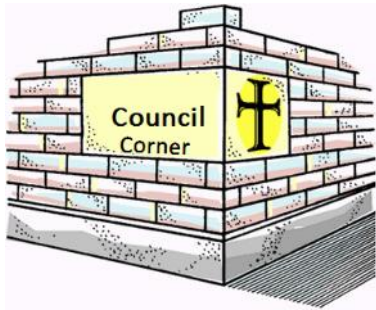
I saw the finished new church bathrooms! They are fresh, cozy, well lit, sparkly clean, and even outfitted with EXTRA toilet paper... but, no congregants would be fussing over how beautiful they are, in the morning. The church kitchen was quiet and void of the normal food ingredients needed to serve a delicious Easter morning fellowship hour. Tomorrow would also NOT be filled with the busy, joyous greeting of extra friends and loved ones that normally join our Easter Worship.

A pandemic has forced weeks of unsettling changes on us all (as pandemics have done for centuries). But, I think we will see some changes that are for the good. This opportunity is giving us time to ponder and appreciate what we have together as a congregation, and together as friends in Christ. It can't stop the joy that comes from knowing and celebrating Christ is alive and Easter Sunday's still a-coming!

Julene Leshner



- ◆ PLEASE CONTACT US! HIPPA laws do not allow the hospital to notify the church if there is a member in the hospital. The patient or a family member must contact the church office to let us know that about the hospitalization. During office hours, call 402-474-1505 or email [office@egrace.org](mailto:office@egrace.org) to let us know. Thank you!
- ◆ To contact Pastor Eric after office hours, you can call or text him at 308-708-1146 or email [pr.eric@egrace.org](mailto:pr.eric@egrace.org).
- ◆ The deadline for the next Greeter will be May 20th.
- To help us stay connected during our time apart please send an email or letter with any personal update you want to share about yourself or prayer concern for someone else. We will post these under news and prayers in our weekly digital newsletter and our monthly newsletter.
- ◆ Church Council Vacancy: We currently have a vacancy on our church council. This is a three-year position beginning January 2020. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Pastor Eric, Neil Larson, or the church office.



Financial Secretary -We had a 5 Sunday week in March so despite the lack of in-person services, we brought in more than we've spent. People have been mailing in checks and a few have signed up for online giving.

Worship & Music-We are recording audio downloads for online worship. Better sound quality. Exploring better live streaming sound for in-person worship.

Education - Online Sunday School now on the church website. We exploring a possible virtual VBS. Confirmation Sunday moved to Fall.

Property - Stained glass repair will resume (hopefully) at the end of May. Nave roof repair still being explored. Bathrooms done and paid.

Social Ministry - Gathering Place is distributing food on Saturday and Sundays via boxes over the fence.



# Mark Your Calendars EVENTS



## Sunday Morning Adult Study

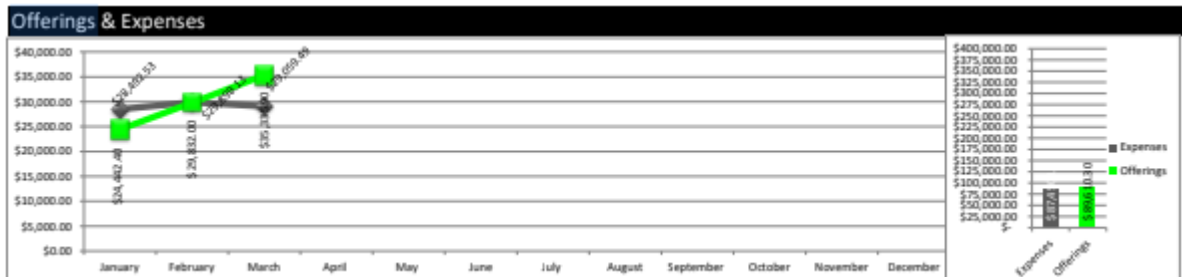
This month we explore the theme **“Justice and the Prophets”**. God calls us to be a people of both justice and compassion. So we will explore what this means as God’s people living in today’s world. Come joins us online after worship.

Sunday School at Grace is now online. Click the **Online Sunday School** link on the front page of our website!



The **Grace Lutheran Thrivent Financial** group May meeting has been canceled.

### March Treasurer’s Report



**May 3, 2020**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Introduction

Today is sometimes called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Jesus is called the “gate” of the sheep in today’s gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world’s violence and war. We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all creation.

Prayer

O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

Comments from the Cloud of Witnesses

You are a secretary descending in an elevator from the 106th floor, long after hours. There is a blackout. The building is deserted for a three-day weekend. Panic envelops you as the walls of the elevator seem to shrink. Then unimaginably, the ceiling of the compartment is thrown back. Hands grasp you and deliver you from your prison. You are free and embraced in welcome. . . . As our door into the dominion of God, Jesus is our shepherd. Through Christ we find our way home to God. Christ is guardian of the threshold of God’s mercy for us. Heed the voice, and be shepherded through. —Jann Esther Boyd

**May 10, 2020**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Introduction

As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today’s gospel includes Jesus’ promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in his Father’s house. Our baptism commissions us to share Jesus’ mission in the world. As 1 Peter reminds us, we are a holy people, called to proclaim the one who called us out of darkness into light. In words and deeds we bear witness to the risen Christ—our way, our truth, our life.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, and to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

#### Comments from the Cloud of Witnesses

The now-late Rachel Held Evans proclaimed that “Death is something empires worry about, not something resurrection people worry about.” Today in the season of Easter we have readings that contain graphic deaths, pleas to God to save the author from death and enemies, and the disciples’ fear of going the wrong way and ending up in death rather than in the way of Jesus. Empire surrounds and bleeds into every aspect of our life, but today we celebrate the resurrection and the season of Easter and know that Jesus is the way to the Father in spite of all the death around us.

**May 17, 2020**

#### **Sixth Sunday of Easter**

##### Introduction

Jesus does not abandon his followers. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to abide with his disciples of every generation. As Pentecost draws near, we are reminded that the risen Christ dwells in us as the Spirit of truth. We receive this Spirit in baptism and pray that in our gathering around the Lord’s table the Spirit will transform us to be the body of the risen Christ in the world.

##### Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

##### Readings and Psalm

Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 66:8-20

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

#### Comments from the Cloud of Witnesses

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, the Spirit of virtue, a commanding Spirit....So the Spirit, to each one who receives it, as though given to that believer alone, pours forth sufficient and perfect grace to each one, and so is enjoyed by each one. —Basil

**May 24, 2020**

#### **Ascension of Sunday**

##### Introduction

In today’s readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples were told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

##### Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your only Son was taken into the heavens and in your presence intercedes for us. Receive us

and our prayers for all the world, and in the end bring everything into your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### Readings and Psalm

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

#### Comments from the Cloud of Witnesses

The Ascension of Christ is our uplifting, for where the glory of Our Head shall go, there the hope of our body is called. Let us then rejoice exceedingly with fitting joy, and let us be glad with devout thanksgiving. For on this day, not alone are we made sure heirs of paradise, but in Christ we have already reached the heights of heaven, and we have obtained more abundant gifts through the ineffable favor of Christ than we lost through the envy of the devil. —Leo

**May 31, 2020**

#### **Day of Pentecost**

#### Introduction

Pentecost derives its name from the Jewish festival celebrating the harvest and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai fifty days after Passover. Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the Holy Spirit as God's presence within and among us. In Acts the Spirit arrives in rushing wind and flame, bringing God's presence to all people. Paul reminds us that though we each have different capacities, we are unified in the Spirit that equips us with these gifts. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples, empowering them to forgive sin. We celebrate that we too are given the breath of the Holy Spirit and sent out to proclaim God's redeeming love to all the world.

#### Prayer of the Day

O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

#### Readings and Psalm

Numbers 11:24-30

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

Acts 2:1-21

John 20:19-23

#### Comments from the Cloud of Witnesses

The Christian story of Pentecost is a story of wind and fire, our images for talking about God as spirit. Fire we can usually contain and put into our service, but fire can be an overzealous or unwelcome servant which consumes much more than we wish. No wonder that one of the oldest names for God in the Hebrew Scriptures translates to English as Consuming Fire. This Consuming Fire of the Spirit of God blew rushing and mightily upon the disciples and drove them out of Jerusalem, scattering them like seeds all over the earth, filling them with words which changed many lives but which eventually, if we can believe all the legends, got almost every last one of them killed. —Frederick A. Niedner, Jr.

March Council Meeting  
Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Present: Neil Larson, Doug Krueger, Cindy Eberspacher, Connie Thorson, Carla Ingersoll, Jan Branting, Roger Potts, Pr. Eric Lesh-er

Absent: Karen Billings

Opening Prayer

Approval of Council Minutes:

Roger made a motion to accept the February minutes as approved. Doug seconded. Motion passed.

Correspondence: Thank you letter from South Street Temple for our church's donation to their building in response to the recent vandalism at their synagogue.

Staff Reports:

Pastor Eric's Report: Meeting in May with Grace Lutheran Church in Walton, NE to discuss possibilities of shared ministry between the two congregations.

Good Samaritan Account will be suspended for now. We will only distribute food from the Food Pantry.

Table banner being designed for the welcome center.

Director of Music Report: written report submitted; members welcome to help decorate the church with tulips and lilies on Saturday, April 11 at 10:00 AM

Financial Secretary's Report: written reports submitted for January and February

Treasurer's Report: written reports submitted for January and February

Doug motioned to accept the reports; Roger seconded. Motion passed.

Committee Reports:

Finance/Stewardship - written report

Worship & Music - written report submitted and read

Parish Ed - written report; a great joint effort planned by Grace and Friedens church for Vacation Bible School. Will be held at Friedens and run Thursday – Sunday, July 9-12.

Congregational Life - written report; June 7th at 5:00 PM is the "First Annual Grace Jello Potluck." Pork sandwiches and chips will be served. Everyone will bring their favorite Jello dish.

Property - written report; Spring Clean-up is March 28. Prescott Fifth graders come ahead of time to help. Installing LED tube lights is 50% incentive from LES; restroom update; new contractors will look at the roof over the nave.

Social Ministry - written report; Jan needs updated list of homebound; will send a note card instead of the in-person visit since senior living residences are in lockdown.

Memorials – Doug asked if the committee made decisions or does council? Will check past minutes and find the limit on the amount of money that can be spent.

Roger made a motion to accept the committee reports as printed. Jan seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business:

Audit Committee – a random audit will be done this year by Mark Billings, Kevin Dumler, Kurt Eberspacher.

Council Lenten Lunch Review – March 25th: Ham sandwiches, potato chips, salad

New Business:

Easter Eggstravaganza – Agreed to cancel

Easter Coffee Hour – Doug will get 7-8 dozen donuts, juice, and mixed fruit

April Committee Meetings – Committees held on April 14; Council meeting held on April 21. Changes will be posted in bulletin and newsletter.

Wednesday Night Schedule – No meal offered after Easter through May: Chapel 5:45-6:15 PM; Wired Word 6:15 PM; Confirmation 7:00 PM.

Review Constitution Changes – Eligibility to serve for two two-year terms on council. Ratify Constitution on April 19 with approval in November. Jan motioned to amend the Constitution to serve two-year terms for two years. Cindy seconded it. Motion passed. Being no further business to discuss, Roger made the motion to adjourn and Jan seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Connie Thorson, Secretary



When Grace was responsible for serving at **The Gathering Place** on April 20, procedures had changed since March 30.

Currently, only two volunteers help at each meal in order to facilitate strict social distancing. Facial masks (besides the usual gloves) are mandatory. Regina and Steve Paschold baked lots of brownies to add to the chicken and noodle casserole meal prepared at the site.

No seconds were served, but the count was 139—a record for the new regimen of distributing one box per person outside the building.



**Jacob Krueger** has accepted the sacristan position at Lutheran Summer Music and has been assigned an internship at Epiphany Lutheran in Carbondale, Illinois. He writes: "I give God thanks for you all, for the prayers, the well wishes, and the many ways you have helped shape who I am today."

**The Lutheran Food Pantry** needs the following food items: Canned spaghetti sauce, canned meals (spaghetti o's, ravioli, etc.), Canned chicken, Canned fruit, Canned red beans (kidney, chili, etc.), Pancake mix, Pancake syrup, 1 pound bag of rice, Peanut butter, Jelly, Dry pasta - noodles and elbow macaroni, Boxed macaroni & cheese, Hamburger helper, Ramen noodles, Shampoo, Any shelf stable item.



**Wednesday Online**  
**Saturday Online**  
**Sunday Online**





## **Birthdays**

May 01– Mildred Needham's

May 02– Colton Billings  
Joanie Rathjen

May 03– Gladys Badberg  
Jordan Billing  
Shawn Rathjen

May 04– Amy Knobbe  
Everett Haider  
Virginia Potts

May 07– Grace Fitzgibbons

May 09– Sadie Heim

May 10– Kaitlyn Dumler

May 12– Erin Odem

May 14– Johnathon Olston  
Ken McKillips

May 16– Sandra Robinson

May 17– Corene Herbster  
Patricia Lickei

May 18– Chloe Robinson

May 20– Aislynn Haider  
Michael Lewis

May 21– Ronald Ossian

May 22– William Abbot

May 24– Kevin Melang-Thoren

May 25– Amber Leshner  
Laura Coatney

May 26– Andrea Holtgrewe  
Michael Lewis

May 27– Shawn McKillip

May 28– Rhys Hughes

May 29– Phyllis Krueger  
Robin Hoffman

May 30– Anthony Zimmerman  
Kevin Gade

May 31– Jon Thorson

## **Anniversaries**

-May 01– Edward, Nancy Hoffman

-May 06– Kevin, Francis Gade

-May 7– Dennis and Beverly  
Madison

-May 14– Ben, Jennifer Klein  
Donald, Estelle Riemans

-May 15– Kevin, Cynthe Dumler

-May 19– Ken, Carmen McKillip

-May 21– Andy, Joan Anderson

-May 27– Chris and Wendy Apple





Grace and Peace to you during this uncharted time,

About this time last year, we found out our lives were changing in big ways - a move to a new state, changes in jobs, new stages in the kids' lives. Little did we know that a short year later, we would be self-isolated, preparing for worship and community building online, supporting teachers and students through a drastic shift in educational philosophy, design, and delivery - all while enjoying extra time with Aislynn and Everett at home; they have become regular Zoom superstars in staff meetings and classes!

We are living through an unprecedented time and I am sure that anxiety, frustration, and distrust are as rampant in Nebraska as they are here in Minnesota. Psalm 74 has been prominent in my thoughts lately. Going to an empty church each week to help lead worship services that will be placed online is an odd experience. You get used to seeing a building full of life, and laughter, and warmth. But now, the church is a dark, cold, and echoey place.

It feels like we are in the opening verses of the Psalm, "O God, why do you cast us off forever? Remember your congregation, which you acquired long ago, which you redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage." This Psalm is a good reminder that sometimes we dwell in times and places that are dark; sometimes it is tough or even impossible to see God at work in the world around us. We are an Easter people and we get used to quickly moving from the horror of Good Friday to the joy of Easter morning. This Psalm reminds us that despair and hurt don't always run their course in three days' time.

The short ending of Mark's gospel is also perfect for us. Chapter 16 has 20 verses, but the earliest manuscripts end at verse 8, "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." Dear friends, we are in verse 8 right now. The great thing about this gospel, is that even though the words end abruptly, the terror eventually passed and the good news was shared as Chapter 16 was expanded. Our empty churches look a lot like the empty tomb right now and we are all filled with terror in the face of this pandemic. Let Psalm 74 be a reminder to cry out to God and lean on God. Let Mark's gospel remind us that it isn't the end of our story.

The Haiders

Dustin, Rachel, Aislynn, and Everett

# Grace Staff & Council

**Rev. Eric Leshner,**

*Senior Pastor*

*308-708-1146*

*pr.eric@egrace.org*

2020 Church Council

**David Sage**

*Parish Administrator*

*office@egrace.org*

**Anne Melang-Thoren,**

*Director of music*

*anne@egrace.org*

**Jennifer Aliwarga-Carlson**

*Assistant Organist*

**Robert Stimbart,**

*Custodian*

**Judi Schroeder,**

*Nursery Coordinator*

**Elizabeth Krueger,**

*Nursery attendant*

Neil Larson

Council President

Carla Ingersoll

Vice President

Karen Billings

Congregational Life

Jan Branting

Social Ministry

Cindy Eberspacher

Parish Education

Doug Krueger

Memorials

Roger Potts

Property

Vacant

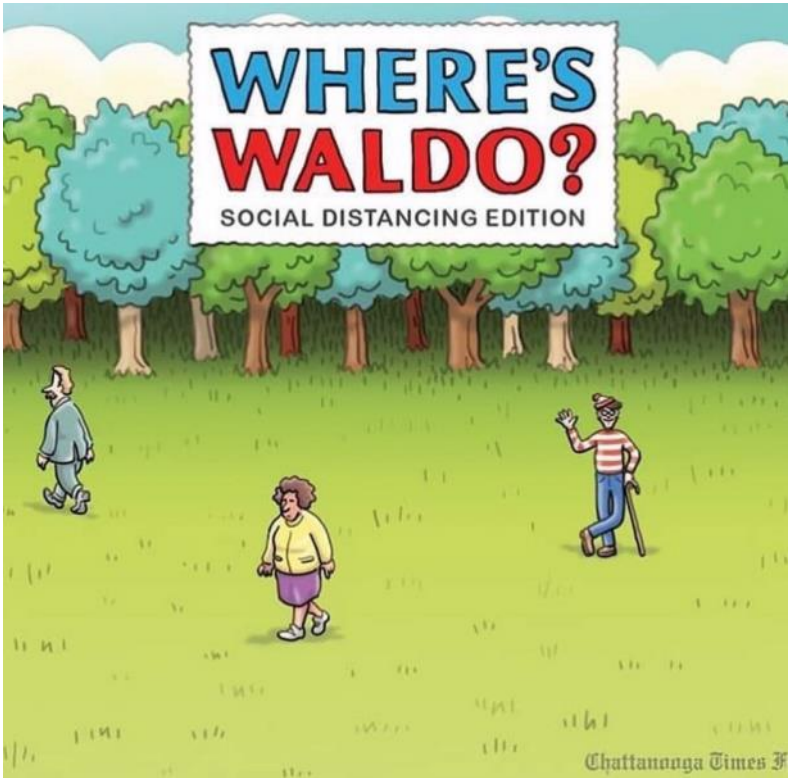
Stewardship/Finance

Connie Thorson

Secretary

Jim Krueger

Treasurer



Grace Lutheran Church  
2225 Washington Street  
Lincoln NE 68502  
402-474-1505  
office@egrace.org

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