



# Tower Echoes 2020

From the Pastor,

Today, March 20, is spring. The birds seem happy singing their songs and the squirrels are hopping around being squirrely. People have to enjoy watching from the house. Life goes on for nature while our lives are put on hold. Everyday brings new information and new restrictions. But churches and people also seek ways to help each other and not just focus on themselves. Service to others and worship is what the church is about. We must keep checking on one another but not in person. We can still worship, just not the way we want. We know that God makes all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

This crisis too can be used for us to learn to be creative and use these lessons once we can gather again together. Until then we must stay safe. Cling to your faith. Your faith is the one thing the Covid-19 virus can not destroy.

Pastor Jim

## Facebook

Hope Lutheran Church has a Facebook page. I saw for the first time March 20. Hope and Grace will share the page for now. Up to date information about the church and members can be found on this page. I will also be able stream a form of worship service with message. I am writing this following a meeting discussing the page and streaming worship. I have not had time to think this through yet. I will lead prayer at 7:00 p.m. on midweek service nights March 25 and April 1. I will stream Sunday Worship services. I will do something at 7:00 p.m. on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. I saw a pastor friend of mine who said on Facebook "pray for the pastors who have never streamed before, that their service doesn't look like a Binladen kidnapping video." Travis said he immediately thought of me.



## ***The Rumors are True... Pastor is an Internet Sensation.***

*At a minimum, sermons are being broadcast on Facebook during the COVID-19 Pandemic. You can go to church in your pajamas, while eating pancakes, or while unloading your dishwasher. You can even sit down with your family and watch the services at the time when you would otherwise be at church.*

**Web Address: [fb.me/HopeGraceELCA](https://fb.me/HopeGraceELCA)**

**YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE A FACEBOOK ACCOUNT TO VIEW THE INFORMATION POSTED OR WATCH THE VIDEOS!**

In the spirit of cooperation and helping people stay connected, Hope Lutheran has agreed to share its Facebook page with Grace Lutheran. One page will make it easier on Pastor Helgren to share messages and information with both congregations. Additionally, it will help our community remain connected moving forward.

We posted video sermons from Pastor on Sunday morning (3/22/2020) and Wednesday evening (3/25/2020). In the future, we hope to be able to go “live” in different contexts — it could be Pastor talking to both Congregations in a virtual church service, a congregation member conducting a mini-Sunday school class, etc. Feel free to send a message to the page or contact one of the page administrators directly—Jane Antholz (Hope) and Erin Ebeler Rolf (Grace).

If you’re on Facebook, please share information about the churches’ page on your own Facebook page and invite your friends to join the group. Don’t forget to invite “kids” or former community members who have moved away. We hope that in addition to keeping people up to speed on church matters, this page can serve as a source of support for everyone and a reminder that God’s Love, Hope, and Grace are always there for us!

So far, the response to the page has been amazing. Between Friday, March 20 and Wednesday, March 25:

- 86 new people have “liked” the page, bringing the total followers of the page to 229 people
- More than 2,100 unique individuals saw at least one post from the page in that time period. Most of those people are likely followers of the page or the friends/family of those individuals. It could have been a sermon, a posting about a service opportunity re: sewing masks for hospitals, or an informational post. But, in any case, information about our churches and God’s message in a difficult time is being broadcast.
- More than 600 people watched at least some portion of Pastor’s March 22nd sermon.
- More than 30 surgical masks have been sewn by members of the congregations for distribution to Johnson County Hospital (primary recipient) and UNMC / Children’s Hospital. More individuals have stated that they will also be making masks as well. The pattern to make masks is posted on the page, and there is also an instructional link on how to make them included in the posting. If you want to make masks, but need supplies, contact Erin. Hard copies of the pattern were also set in Grace’s basement if that is easier for someone to view the pattern.

If you have ideas for content for the page, please reach out to Jane or Erin. We’re hoping that someone will create some fun videos that could be put up for children in the community. For example, maybe you want to host a 10 minute sing-a-long while you play the guitar or a piano. You could show kids how to make a simple craft using items around the house. We’re only limited by our imaginations, and parents will be grateful for safe content that can keep home-bound kids busy for awhile. If you need help with your idea, let us know. If we can help in a socially-distanced manner, we will!

**Contact Information:** Jane Antholz — [jantholz@gmail.com](mailto:jantholz@gmail.com); 402-432-4085

Erin Ebeler Rolf — [eebeler@gmail.com](mailto:eebeler@gmail.com); 402-326-8370

The Piecemakers blanket making is usually the 3rd Tuesday of the month starting in April. This wonderful group of women meet and tie blankets for the needy. Since we are not able to meet as a group on that day, or as a group of 10 anytime, Joyce would like to put the blankets into the frames for the ladies to tie any time that they wish. Rich and Joyce have volunteered to check on the blankets daily and to replace the blankets that have been completed, so that maybe a couple a week is better than none. There are no activities going on at church at this time, so the basement is open for this. It is easier to roll the blanket with 2 people, if you have someone you feel safe with, if not tie what you can. Please give Joyce a call - 402-297-0178 if you have any questions.



These are some of the Piecemakers displaying a few of the blankets that are being sent to Carol's House of Hope in Omaha



**Church Seasons:** The Church Season of Lent continues until April 11. The Season of Easter begins April 12. This is the Resurrection of our Lord. We celebrate the resurrection in our lives until the Day of Pentecost, May 30th.

**Church Festival Days:** April 5 – Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion

April 5-8 – Holy Week

April 9 – Maundy Thursday

April 10 - Good Friday

April 12 – The Resurrection of Our Lord

April 25 – St. Mark, Evangelist

**Jewish Holidays:** April 8 – Passover begins at Sundown

**U. S. Holidays:** April 1 – April Fool's Day

April 12 – Easter

April 22 – Administrative Professionals Day

## April Birthdays

5<sup>th</sup> – Alexis Dorn

Ryan Panko

7<sup>th</sup> – Gayleen Eden

8<sup>th</sup> – Janet Dieckgrafe

9<sup>th</sup> – Lisa Cropp

13<sup>th</sup> – Robin Eggleston

15<sup>th</sup> – Mitchell Brinkman

16<sup>th</sup> – Troy Bailey

17<sup>th</sup> – Tom Brinkman

19<sup>th</sup> – Robyn Faris

21<sup>st</sup> – Michael Carman

24<sup>th</sup> – Lori Panko

27<sup>th</sup> – Larry Naber

28<sup>th</sup> – Owen Weber

29<sup>th</sup> – Amber Beard

APRIL

## ANNIVERSARY

*April 29th*

*Dave & Diane Smith*

The Nebraska Synod has sent a letter of appreciation to Grace Lutheran Church for their 2019 Mission Support of \$7,412.50 . Pastor would also like to thank the congregation for their financial support of the Nebraska Synod of the ELCA.

Spring Cleaning  
will be thru  
April 4th

## BASKETS OF PROMISE

*The Lutheran World Relief Baskets of Promise is still being planned to be collected this year, but will wait until the time is better for all to collect the items.*

# APRIL 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 	2	3	4
5	6 <b>PALM SUNDAY</b> Bible Study 1:30 pm	7	8	9	10 <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b>	11 <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b> 
12 <b>RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD!</b> <b>EASTER SUNDAY</b> 	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		<b>Piecemakers</b> Blanket Making			<b>TOWER</b> <b>ECHOES</b> <b>DEADLINE</b>	
		<b>Church Council</b> 7:30 p.m.				
26	27	28	29	30		
						

## Grace Lutheran Church Council

**17 MARCH 2020**

Grace Lutheran Church Council met 17 March 2020. The meeting was called to order by Paul Wilken. Pastor Jim Helgren started the meeting with a prayer. Council members present were Caleb Eggleston, Paul Wilken, Amber Beard, Richard Roesener, Robin Eggleston, and Gene Ekhoff. Also, in attendance were Jim Helgren and Diane Wilken.

Robin Eggleston made a motion to accept the minutes of the 18 February 2020 meeting. Richard Roesener seconded. Motion carried.

The financial report was reviewed. The account balances as of 28 February 2020 are:

Current: \$6,315.66

Memorial: \$13,854.21

Improvement: \$7,367.06

Luther League: \$4,163.56

Richard Roesener made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Caleb Eggleston seconded. Motion carried.

**Pastor Helgren's Monthly Report:**

Pastor Helgren provided his list of congregational visits for the month of February.

He will have worship at Belle Terrace (27 April 2020 at 10 am) and Linden View (22 April 2020 at 2pm).

We will be cancelling Lenten Services, as well as Thursday luncheons until further notice.

Wedding at Hope 2 May 2020 will be held.

A thank you letter was received from Mission Support from the Nebraska Synod 2019 (Fiscal year February 1 to January 30).

**Committee Reports:**

**Property committee: Council – Gene Ekhoff**

Lights are done, fixtures were replaced, and bulbs were added/replaced.

Sink in the storeroom was discussed, regarding if it was needed or not.

Plaster on the walls of the bell tower are falling down and needing to be replaced (with a bid of \$2,5000 -\$3,2000) ELCA ladies have raised some of the money to cover repairs. Upon completion, the walls will need painted.

Gene Ekhoff made motion to move forward with this process (plaster repair and painting). Robin Eggleston second. Motion carried.

Remote for the parsonage garage opener needs replaced, and motion light set up.

Additionally, when the weather warms up the parsonage and the propane tanks power washed and painted.

**Worship, Evangelism, Music & Fellowship: Council – Richard Roesener**

People are encouraged to sign up for Sunday Worship Duty

**Parish Ed & Young People: Council – Amber Beard**

Kids for Christ will not be held while school is out (due to COVID-19 closures).

Mike McDonald will be setting up times to pick up cans again, for the LL Trip 2021.

continued on next page

Council minutes continued

Stewardship & Memorial: Council – Robin Eggleston

Handicap sign has been placed on the door. Circuit breaker needed reset to ensure the door is working correctly.

Storage room will remain secure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other Business:

Spring Cleaning – pending plaster and painting job. Reminded to cover organ, piano, and seats, and turn off fans. Saturday (21 March 2020 at 0900) morning is set for the council to clean up the beams of the church.

New Business:

Church services will not be held until 3 May 2020, unless the Governor decides to lift the restriction. Auburn's St. Paul Church invited pastors from churches from around the area to participate in services that will be broadcasted.

Easter & Sunrise service - See above

Plans for Graduation Breakfast—3 May 2020

New Entryway Floor Mat Needs replaced – committee will begin searching

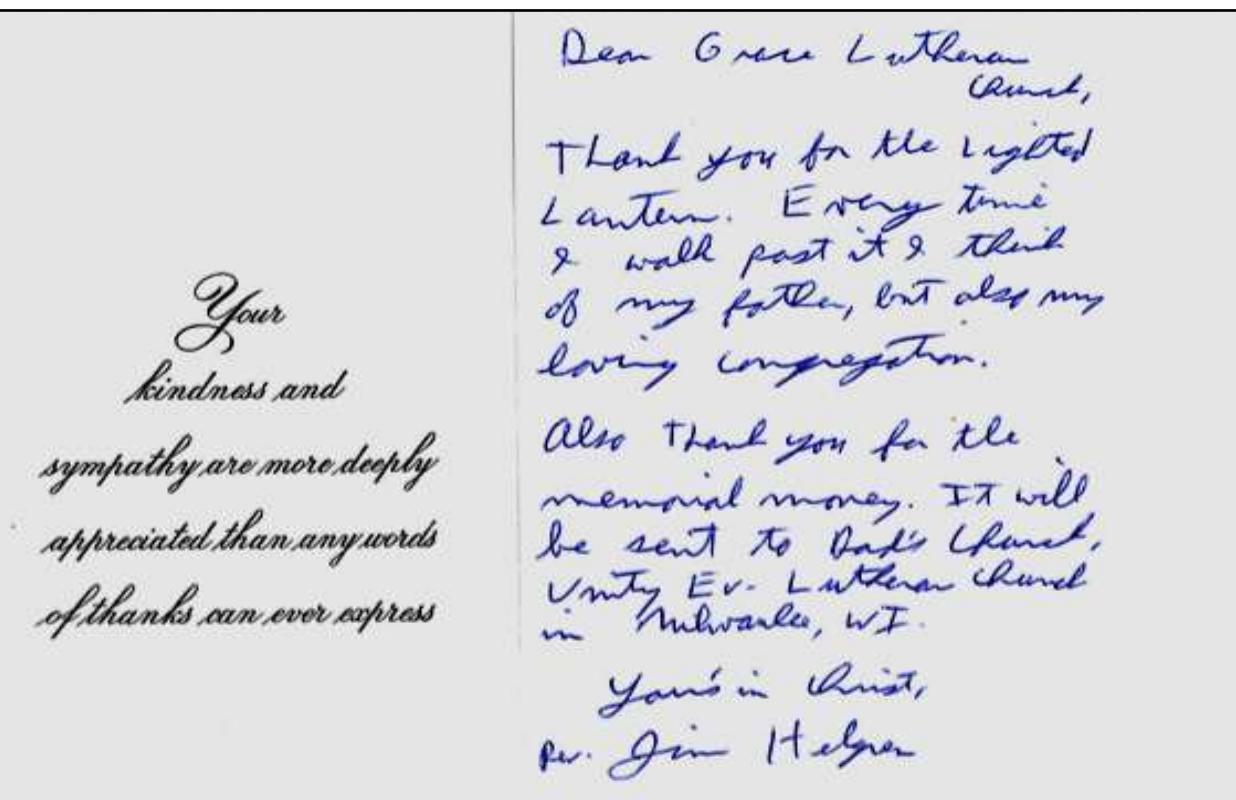
Pastor's 35-year Anniversary

11 October 2020: we will join Mission Fest, Pastor's 35-year Anniversary, and his birthday!

Next Meeting will be 21 April 2020.

Meeting was adjourned by Paul Wilken, and the meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Amber L. Beard



**Grace Lutheran Church Council  
SPECIAL MEETING  
26 MARCH 2020**

Grace Lutheran Church Council met 26 March 2020. The meeting was called to order by Paul Wilken. Pastor Jim Helgren started the meeting with a prayer. Council members present were Caleb Eggleston, Paul Wilken, Amber Beard, Richard Roesener, Robin Eggleston, and Gene Ekhoff. Also, in attendance were Pastor Jim Helgren & Diane Wilken.

Meeting was called together to discuss the new Facebook page, online church services, communion, and the balcony wall repair and painting.

The Facebook page has been well received and assistance for those who do not have access to Facebook will be allowed through the web address [fb.me/HopeGraceELCA](https://fb.me/HopeGraceELCA). Accolades to Jane Antholz and Erin Ebeler Rolf for their contributions.

Communion options were discussed. Communion could be performed in cars, in a drive through fashion. Also, discussed was allowing church members to do a walk through the church permitting members to receive communion and blessing. Another option would be to offer this outside weather permitting. This will be discussed further at the next church council meeting 21 April 2020.

The balcony wall was fixed for under the estimate amount (\$1980 after the company graciously donated the materials). The women of the church raised \$1600 that they donated to this project. Painting will need to be completed. Motion was made to permit Nate Gerking to paint the repaired walls. Robin Eggleston second. Motion carried.

Next Meeting will be scheduled 21 April 2020.

Meeting was adjourned by Paul Wilken and the meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Amber L. Beard



March 27, 2020

To the Saints of the Nebraska Synod

***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear..." --Psalm 46***

Dear Friends in Christ:

In a time such as this, in which threats with names like virus and recession are piled on top of countless other less-specific uncertainties, I call you to remember the promise of the Word in texts like that above. Beneath everything that feels unsure, we stand on the Good News of God's grace in Jesus Christ, and the assurance of his constant presence.

I'm writing to remind you of that truth, and because some have asked for clear guidance for a variety of matters. Please understand that what I share here isn't put forward as "commandments from the bishop," but as counsel from the synod's pastor. Every congregation, leader, and member will need to make thoughtful decisions appropriate to their situation. In the acknowledgement that I may be wrong, I offer the following counsel:

**Not gathering for worship:** while the information is not always clear or consistent and the temptation is strong to gather in person—we miss each other!—we have an obligation of love to our neighbor not to endanger her or him by violating guidelines put in place for the sake of the community's health. My desire to be with others does not trump the reality that I may be the source of another's infection. I urge congregations to follow community directives on avoiding or limiting gatherings until those directives are lifted.

**Holy Communion practices:** the Lutheran understanding of the Sacrament of the Table is that it is a bread-and-cup experience of Christ's presence in a flesh-and-blood gathering of his people. While deeply important to believers, it is not essential to salvation, and there are times when we may, voluntarily or otherwise, fast from receiving it. My counsel, affirming the guiding principles of the ELCA, would be simply not to celebrate the sacrament in any form until we are able to gather in person again. This is a truly exceptional time, and I recognize that congregations, in consultation with their pastors, may choose another practice for the duration of the current situation. Our pastoral leaders are well-trained theologians sensitive to ministry in their context. Trust them. And know that when "normal" returns, exceptional practices will no longer be necessary.

**Offerings and finances:** your congregation is even more reliant on your support when you can't gather in person. Now is the perfect time for your congregation to set up online options for receiving offerings—and of course one can always send a check in the mail. I urge congregations to prioritize staff salaries and benefits should decisions about expenses need to be made. Our office is working to stay abreast of help available for congregations through the Mission Investment Fund, the ELCA Credit Union, and other sources, as well as understanding what federal stimulus-related resources, if any, congregations might access. In this uncertain time, those of us with the means to do so need to step up our generosity, recognizing that there are those whose means have changed drastically. We are all in this together, and we share our burdens and our blessings.

**Holy Week and Easter:** the holiest time of our year is approaching, and we almost certainly will not yet be able to gather in person. Most of our congregations are finding ways to share worship online, by phone, or by mailing in-home worship resources to members. I'm certain this will be true for all of Holy Week and Easter. While we can't change the date of Easter, every Sunday is a celebration of the Resurrection, so if your congregation chooses to make the first Sunday you're able to gather again in person your celebration of Easter, with all the music, decoration, and festive elements of Easter Sunday, do so with joy.

**Care for others:** I am humbled and awed by the creativity and energy I see as members and congregations of this church invest themselves in innovative ways of staying connected with those most isolated and alone, providing food and more for those most negatively impacted, partnering with neighboring congregations to provide inspiration, encouragement, and worship, and so much more. Such faithfulness. Thank you, church—for being church!

**Care for self:** the radical shift in daily life is draining on all of us, and this new reality is going to stretch on for some time. Please, pace yourself. Limit your exposure to news, to social media, to anything that compounds uncertainty or distress. Breathe deeply. Take the time to pray. Be patient with yourself (and with those who live with you). Remember that you are God's beloved creation. Care for yourself as such.

We are all in this together—with one another and with the God we know most fully through the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Be encouraged. Have hope. Know you are prayed for, cared about, and much appreciated.

The Nebraska Synod staff are here to serve and support to the best of our ability. We are committed to keeping you informed—while being sensitive to the vast amount of information being shared these days. Thank you for your prayers. Please know you are in ours.

Yours in Christ, Brian D Maas, Bishop

## Easter Blessings

*May Christ's glory and  
the promise of this joyous  
time of year, bring peace  
and happiness to you and  
those you hold most dear.*

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Correction

Requested



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