



Tower
Echoes
2023

From the Pastor,

The New Year started with a bang for my family. Kathy had open heart surgery on January 10th. It was a planned procedure. As of this writing, January 18 she is at home with some restrictions but not helpless. She is already getting tired of me reminding her about the restrictions. Nagging was the term used jokingly for my one too often reminders.

The Nurse Navigator explained why the restrictions are in place. Up to Monday no one really clearly explained the concerns behind the restrictions. Once we finally understood the reasons for the rules and what we were trying to prevent from happening it was easier to desire to follow the restrictions, even if they seemed “stupid” or “useless” before the information was given.

The confirmation class just finished studying the Ten Commandments. Some students knew them from Sunday School or sermons. We know there are certain things that God does not want us to do. We understand that there may be punishment associated with the breaking of the commandments. We don’t always understand that one can also keep the commandments as well as break them.

It helps to know that a Loving God who established a relationship with us at our baptism wants to remain in a relationship with us our entire lives. The Ten Commandments list restrictions to prevent us from hurting our relationship with God, Father, Holy Spirit, as well as our relationship with others including family and church family, and from hurting ourselves emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

It is the job of the Pastor and Sunday School teachers to remind us about our relationship with God and how to remain in it. When the pastor or fellow Christian points out how we are hurting our relationship with God, others, or ourselves they are sometimes referred to as nags or worse. Especially when the term sin or sinner is used. Sometimes these nags are told to mind their own business. We don’t always like to be told or reminded about God’s restrictions. And no one likes to be called a sinner. It’s a reminder that we really aren’t in control of our world the way we think we want to be in control.

“Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy” the third commandment, informs us that God is always willing to welcome us back and forgive us for breaking the restrictions and begin a renewed relationship with God. Worship helps us be and remain in a good spiritual relationship with God. Thank God that God cares enough about you to give you rules to live by now and forever.

Pastor Jim

Church Seasons: The Sundays after Epiphany run until February 22. It is the season of Light, God’s light shining onto the world. We seek to find God in the ordinary things in our lives. Ash Wednesday, February 22 this year is the beginning of Lent and finding ways to repent and become closer to God.

Church Festival Days:

February 2—Presentation of Our Lord
February 18—Martin Luther, member of the church died, 1546
February 19—Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 22—Ash Wednesday

U.S. Holidays

February 2—Groundhog Day
February 14—Valentine’s Day
February 20—President’s Day
February 21—Mardi Gras

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1st—Mikaela Thomas

3rd—Prestin Thomas

5th—Eliot Bohling

6th—Bill Cropp

13th—Rachelle Grof

16th—Louis Bentzinger

18th—Charla Eggleston

20th—Devon Roesener

23rd—David Armknecht

27th—Ethan Bohling

29th—Diane Roesener

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

14th

Bill & Carolyn Cropp
Bruce & Carol Armknecht

26th

Les & Kris Gerking

Assisting Minister February

5—Jody Wellensiek

12—Diane Ekhoﬀ

19—Erin Ebeler

26—Bret Wellensiek

ASH WEDNESDAY

The Ash Wednesday worship is February 22 at 7:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church. Ashes will be distributed as well as the receiving of communion. This is the beginning of Lent and our journey toward the cross with Jesus.

Midweek Lenten Worship at Hope Lutheran are March 1, March 15 and March 29.

Midweek Lenten Worship at Grace Lutheran are March 8 and March 22.

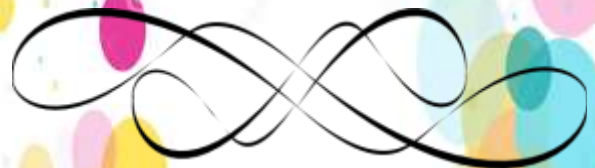
2 New January Babies

Micah Brinkman is happy to announce his new brother
Connor Dean Brinkman.

The boys parents are
Joe & Ellen Brinkman.

Connor was born on
January 24, 2023.

Grandma Judy & Grandpa Arlin are
excited to have a new grandchild.



Russ & Kate Dietz welcomed
Addison Clara Dietz

on January 25, 2023.

She will be well loved by all her
cousins and of course
Grandma Jody & Grandpa Dean.

Grace Lutheran Church Council

January 9, 2023

Grace Lutheran Church Council met December 15, 2023. The meeting was called to order by Vice President Bret Wellensiek. Pastor Jim Helgren started the meeting with a prayer. Council members present were: Kate Dietz, Bret Wellensiek, and Mike Weber. Also in attendance were Pastor Jim Helgren and Diane Wilken-church secretary/treasurer. Absent members were Amber Beard, Erin Ebeler, and Tucker Drake. Bret Wellensiek made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/15/22 meeting. Mike Weber seconded. Motion carried.

The financial report was reviewed. Mike Weber made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Bret Wellensiek seconded. Motion carried.

Pastor Helgren's Monthly Report:

- 1/9/23 Had funeral for Chuck Ebeler
- 1/15/23 Annual Meeting with joint worship and meal to follow. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share.
- 1/22/23 Will install new council members
- Reported on worship services
 - ◊ 12/28 at Linden View
 - ◊ 12/8 and 12/29 Good Sam
 - ◊ Scheduled to do worship at Good Sam on 1/26
- Pastor was not able to baptize granddaughters on 12/3 due to illness. Going to reschedule
- Shared his monthly visits
- Lent starts in February
 - ◊ Has cluster meeting on 1/9/23 to discuss potential of round robin for services
 - ◊ Discussed potential plan for Lenten services
- Kids for Christ was held in December and have it scheduled for 1/11 & 1/25
- Pastor is on jury duty for Federal Court in March 6-31 (unsure if it will impact Lenten services)
- Kathy's surgery is on 1/10/23

Correspondence:

Insurance pamphlet from Brotherhood Mutual

Property Committee: Mike Weber

- Strip in the kitchen floor was fixed
- Flipper on a toilet in the men's bathroom was replaced to prevent water leakage.
- Nativity Scene was taken down and Christmas decorations were put away.
- The outside doors need to be scraped and painted looking into Bob Eichenberger to paint doors
 - ◊ No update

Worship, Evangelism, Music, and Fellowship – Erin Ebeler

- Duty roster
- Cantata – Was on 12/18/22

Parish Education & Young People –Bret Wellensiek

- Sunday School is up and running.
 - ◊ Ordered new materials
 - ◊ Had wonderful Sunday School program
- Luther League
 - ◊ Looking to coordinate an activity

Stewardship & Memorial – Kate Dietz

- White paraments were blessed on 1/8/23

Old Business

- Meat ordered for annual meeting meal
 - ◊ Penny Weber will get buns and BBQ sauce for the meal
 - ◊ Going to put a post on Facebook to reminder of the meal to the congregation
- Annual Meeting
 - ◊ Need two new council members. Available Terms are a one year term and a two year term

New Business

- Lent – Tentative Plan was discussed
- Noisy Coin Offering Designation
 - ◊ January – Tanzanian Orphans

Next meeting will be determined after annual meeting.

Meeting was adjourned by Bret Wellensiek and the meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Kate Dietz



Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of

Chuck Ebeler

Chuck passed away on January 6, 2023 at the age of 73 years.

His funeral was held on January 9th at Grace Lutheran Church with a private family burial at a later date.

Grace Lutheran Family,

Thank you so very much for donating supplies for my First Graders and me during this Christmas Season! You provided us with wonderful books that go along with units I teach. You also gave us a building kit which we will use to build bridges when we get to that story in reading class. They can also use them during inside recess times. I appreciate the paper plates, plastic forks, and snacks. I purchase many of these supplies throughout the year, and it's wonderful to have your help. I can't thank you enough! What a wonderful Christmas you gave us!

Robyn Faris and First Graders

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for the PTO Christmas Wish List items for teachers. You have all been so generous. The items we received have already been put to good use in our classrooms, helping enrich the education of our students. Your support of not only the teachers but also the students means so much. Thank you again for all your generosity!

- Nick & Lisa Weber

Grace Lutheran Church

Annual Meeting

January 15, 2023

Vice President Bret Wellensiek called the meeting to order on Sunday, January 15, 2023, following the worship service. There were 35 members signed in at the meeting. The meeting was opened with a prayer led by Pastor.

A motion was made by Jody Bruns and seconded by Paul Wilken to approve the minutes as printed from the January 16, 2022, Annual Meeting. Motion carried.

The Pastor's Report was reviewed. Pastor thanked the congregation for being there to support Kathy and himself. Pastor will be setting goals for 2023 by the February Church Council meeting. His short-term goal is to wake up each morning. Pastor is supposed to be on federal jury duty in March and is unsure if this will impact the Lenten services. He encouraged suggestions on what the church members would like to study/learn about during the Lenten service. Gene Ekhoﬀ motioned to accept the Pastor's report and Bill Bohling seconded it. Motion carried.

Council Vice President Bret Wellensiek reviewed the reports and opened each one for discussion. Discussion on committee reports was provided, as follows:

Treasurer's Report: Erin Ebeler thanked the congregation for the generous giving for the JCC wish list. We were able to clear out the wish lists that we had signed up for and get more items for other teachers.

Memorial Committee Report: Diane Ekhoﬀ commented that the new white paraments look very nice.

Property Committee Report: Congregation members commented that the sidewalks look nice, smooth, and walking is easier/safer.

Synod Report: Dean Wellensiek spoke about a message from one of the Bishops that he heard this last year. He shared if you don't feel you are being challenged in the church, you aren't doing enough. He encouraged everyone to challenge each other this year and do it joyfully.

Auditor's report was completed by Diane Smith. She found the books were found to be well organized and in good order.

The congregation was updated on the Cluster meetings that have taken place over the last year. Faith in Talmage is currently partnering with Johnson, but the Council wants to keep the conversations open with Faith on ways that we could partner together in the future. Erin Ebeler shared that Council wants to continue building relationships with the neighboring churches. She referenced the Cantata and how it was nice to have so many churches involved.

Grace Lutheran Church's 75th anniversary is coming up in 2024. The current committee members include Sarah Purcell, Dean Wellensiek, and Melissa Wellensiek. Bret Wellensiek shared that they are seeking more volunteers and ideas for the anniversary. A directory was suggested as an activity to be done before the anniversary. There was a 2006 directory available to members to look at as reference.

Council Member Kate Dietz completed her term and Amber Beard has chosen to resign. Vice President Bret Wellensiek said a thank you to the outgoing council members, Amber Beard and Kate Dietz. Bret Wellensiek, Erin Ebeler, and Mike Weber will remain on Council. Tucker Drake is still the Luther League representative.

Discussion ensued as to how many Church Council Members were needed for 2023. Paul Wilken made a motion to stay at five council members and Gene Ekhoﬀ seconded. Motion carried.

Diane Ekhoﬀ nominated Cheryl Grundman for council, which she reported Cheryl had agreed to a one year term to this prior to the meeting. Sarah Purcell volunteered for a two-year term.

Pastor encouraged the congregation to sign up to do council duty to prevent the Council members from getting burned out.

Vice President Bret Wellensiek shared about needing a youth sponsor for Luther League and how the Council has been trying to help and are going to set up a fun activity for the Luther League. Nick and Lisa Weber were nominated for youth sponsor, and they did accept.

Erin Ebeler and Dean Wellensiek were nominated and accepted to attend the Nebraska Synod Assembly on June 2-3 in Kearney.

Richard and Joyce Roesener agreed to be financial secretaries again.

Bret and Melissa volunteered to continue serving through their leadership of the Sunday School Program. Paul Wilken made the motion to cease nominations and Rich Roesener seconded the motion.

The 2023 Proposed Budget was reviewed and opened for discussion. Bret Wellensiek did discuss that due to inflation Council tried to reflect that in the 2023 budget. Diane Ekhoﬀ motioned to accept the budget and Rich Roesener seconded the motion. The budget was approved.

Vice President Bret Wellensiek opened the floor up to the congregation for any other topics they wanted to discuss. Eleta Eisenhauer asked why the church's Christmas service was not advertised in the Chieftain and asked if it was due to money. Pastor answered the question but sharing that it costs \$35 for the advertisement and that in the past the Council did not see an increase in attendance when they have advertised. Pastor asked that church members let him know by November if they would like the Christmas service to be advertised.

Paul Wilken encouraged the congregation to share with Council if there are property issues that need to be fixed.

- Joyce Roesener brought up that there are some stained glass windows on the North side of the church that are cracked.
- Diane Ekhoﬀ suggested that a grab bar be installed in the shower at the parsonage and to consider other ways to make the parsonage more handicap accessible.

Gene Ekhoﬀ motioned to end the meeting and Diane Ekhoﬀ seconded the motion. The meeting concluded with the Lord's Prayer. Members were again invited to join in the basement for the luncheon. The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Dietz

Correction to the Membership List

Please add

Charlene Helgren 304 N. Lawton St., Apt. 10 Cook, NE
864-1015

She became a member in 2022, but was here with us 6 months prior and wasn't added to the 2022 update. Sorry Charlene!





Grace Lutheran Church

306 N. First St.

P.O. Box 96

Cook, NE 68329



Church Office: 402-864-4201

Pastor Jim Helgren: 402-864-2113

Church Email: grace68329@gmail.com