

February

TOWER ECHOES 2024

From the Pastor,

The January theme was rest. The February theme is GO AND... HAVE THE CONVERSATION. This is the ninth theme for us as we build onto the first theme which was pray. Prayer can be restful which fits January's theme. Prayer can help us be honest. It can help us be present with God and help us be aware that God is present with us. Prayer is a building block of our faith and a necessity of our own faith life.

Conversation is more than just talking and it is more than just listening. It requires two or more people to have a conversation. And it requires these participants to be willing to listen to each other. Actively listen to each other and not think about anything else but what is being said. The art of conversation has been lost. We are trying to revive it this month. What conversation do you need to have with someone? Pray before you begin the conversation. What conversation does someone need to have with you? Pray that you are able to truly listen to the other person.

Ash Wednesday is about having a conversation with God. We admit that we are sinful and unclean and we need God to change our very nature. We receive the ash in a form of the cross on our forehead to remind us that we are dust and to dust we shall return, unless God changes our path. Lent is a time we change our path that is focused on ourselves and we focus on what we need to do in order to listen to God. Some Christians will stop doing a bad habit, some will begin a better habit, and some will give up something they enjoy in order to appreciate that Jesus gave up His life for us so we can live with God forever. Jesus reminds us that all we are is dust unless we allow the cross to change our future.

Happy Lenten Journey
Pastor Jim

Church Seasons: The Time after Epiphany ends February 13. Lent begins February 14 with Ash Wednesday. Lent is 40 days plus Sundays.

Church Festival Days:

February 2—Presentation of Our Lord
February 11—The Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 14—Ash Wednesday
February 18—Martin Luther, renewer of the church died, 1546
February 24—Mathias, Apostle

U.S. Holidays

February 2—Groundhog Day
February 11—Super Bowl
February 13—Mardi Gras
February 14—Valentine's Day
February 19—President's Day
February 29—Leap Day



A simple "thank you" does not convey what our hearts feel as we were gifted this beautiful quilt. To think that people would take their time, talent, creativity and energy to craft this masterpiece is beyond words.

We have the quilt on our bed and are always finding a new block that we have not seen before. Some of them have names or initials while others do not. Our gratitude goes deep for the care, thoughtfulness and love that went into making this quilt as it will be cherished.

We also thank you for your support in our ministry to Grace and Hope Lutheran churches and to the communities of Cook and Burr as we call these places our home!

Pastor and Kathy

Minutes – Grace Lutheran Church WELCA Meeting

Sunday, January 7, 2024

An impromptu meeting of the Women of the ELCA Grace Lutheran Church was called to order by Eleta Eisenhauer at 9:33 a.m. on Sunday, January 7, 2023 after worship service.

Present at the meeting were Eleta Eisenhauer, Charlene Helgren, Kristy Ebeler, Lori Panko, Diane Ekhoﬀ, Judy Brinkman, Julie Eﬀken, Joyce Roesener, Alta Bohling, Jody Wellensiek, Diane Wilken and Kathy Helgren.

New Business:

- ◆ The Nebraska Southeast Conference Winter Retreat will be held on Saturday, January 13, 2024 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Grand Island. The conference is asking the churches to make a \$52.50 donation to Katie's Fund. A motion was made by Kathy Helgren to give the \$52.50 donation to Katie's Fund. A second was made by Lori Panko, motion passed. A motion was made by Joyce Roesener to give an offering to the conference for \$125.00. A second was made by Charlene Helgren, motion passed.
- ◆ Children going to Carol Joy Holling Camp this summer was discussed. A motion was made by Judy Brinkman to pay half of the registration cost of children going to camp this summer, other than Confirmation Camp. A second was made by Alta Bohling, motion passed.
- ◆ Chrismons for both Christmas trees were discussed. There are wire/bead kits for these Chrismons that can be made by hand for \$600.00 per tree. The construction of these kits was discussed and it was felt further research needs to be done to see if other options are available.
- ◆ A Lutheran World Relief donation was discussed as well as Pastor's discretionary fund. A motion was made by Diane Ekhoﬀ to give a \$200.00 donation to Pastor's Discretionary Fund. A second was made by Charlene Helgren, motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Helgren, Secretary

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

Lent

Ash Wednesday is February 14. The worship will be at Hope at 7:00 p.m. and will include Holy Communion and disposition of Ashes. The ashes symbolize grieving over our sins and repenting of them.

The Midweek Lenten theme is "GO AND... LENT" put together by Deacon Timothy Siburg, Stewardship, NE Synod. The material is based on the February and March GO AND... themes. The services will be at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday evenings.

February 21 at Grace

February 28 at Hope

March 6 at Grace

March 13 at Hope

March 20 at Grace

March 28—Maundy Thursday at
Grace—7:00 p.m.

March 29—Good Friday at
Hope—7:00 p.m.

Grace will try something for the first time and have a Thursday worship/brunch on February 22, 29 and March 7, 14 & 21. We will start to gather at 11:30 a.m. We will begin serving the meal at 11:45 a.m. and have a service with a theme from the night before at about 12:10 p.m.

The plan for the Thursday gathering is to gather for a simple lunch, fellowship, and God's word. People are invited to come over their lunch hour and eat, worship, and leave on their schedule. This gathering is based on the Lenten Thursday lunches the Tecumseh Ministerial once sponsored. This lunch worship is intended for members of Grace and Hope. Invite others to also attend with you.

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

14th

Bill & Carolyn Cropp

Bruce & Carol Armknecht

26th

Les & Kris Gerking



The Worship, Evangelism and Fellowship Committee will once again be taking pictures of our church members on Sunday, February 18 and Sunday, February 25 following the worship service. Pictures will be taken downstairs in front of the stage, with the curtain drawn. Pictures are being displayed on the south bulletin board in the basement.

GO AND...

HAVE THE CONVERSATION

Conversation is an exchange involving active listening as well as taking turns sharing ideas and stories. It can be easy for us to fall into monologuing, lecturing, or tuning out especially when we think we know the answers. As a result, we often avoid having difficult conversations. Faith-filled disciples are called to be honest and engage with each other in Christ-like love.

Questions to Consider:

- What is your prayer as you consider engaging in a hard conversation?
- When was a time you had a hard conversation? What did it feel like? What did you learn from it?
- What is The conversation that you need to GO have and with whom?

Prayer: Engaging God, who is not afraid of any conversation, give me the words, wisdom, and heart to join in difficult conversations. Amen.

Suggested Song: Canticle of the Turning (ELW 723)

Learn More at www.nebraskasynod.org

GO AND...

The theme for February is GO AND... HAVE THE CONVERSATION. As the Church, the incarnation of Christ, we are called to listen to others in need and speak on their behalf with others. The Church may need to be the place where differing sides can be safe to listen to each other and speak to each other. The Church is called to bring reconciliation to the world. This can be uncomfortable for members of a congregation and yet that is the call of the Church. A church may decide to avoid its call from Christ to be His presence in the world, but then it will have to answer to Christ if it failed to do its purpose in the world.



NATIONAL
QUILTING DAY
2024

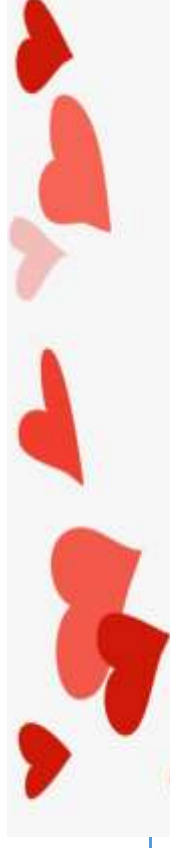
March 16, 2024 is NATIONAL QUILTING DAY, and we at Lutheran World Relief, we have a LOT to celebrate!






For more than 75 years, compassionate people just like you have put their faith into action and made quilts for people in need around the world. And not just a few quilts — nearly 28 MILLION QUILTS!

These gifts of love make life brighter, softer, and a bit more comfortable for our neighbors around the world struggling with chronic poverty, illness, natural disaster and conflict. THANK YOU.

“Those who sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket of love.”

February 2024



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>     </div> <p>During the month of February we will be collecting Socks, underwear & mittens/gloves for men, women and children to be given to the People's City Mission</p>						
4 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion 9:30 am Sunday School	5	6 Piecemakers Blanket Making All Day	7 6, 7 & 8th Grade Confirmation 6:00 p.m.	1 3	2 10	
11 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School	12 Bible Study 2:00 p.m.	13 Piecemakers Blanket Making All Day w/ Covered Dish Luncheon	14 Kids for Christ 4:00 pm No Confirmation Ash Wednesday Worship @ Hope Lutheran 7:00 p.m.	15 ELCW Meeting 7:00 p.m.	16 17	
18 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion 9:30 am Sunday School	19	20 Piecemakers Blanket Making All Day Church Council 7:00 p.m.	21 8th Grade Confirmation 6:00 pm Lenten Worship @ Grace Lutheran 7:00 p.m.	22 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace Lutheran 11:30 a.m.	23 24	
25 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School	26	27 Piecemakers Blanket Making All Day	28 Kids for Christ 4:00 pm NO Confirmation Lenten Worship @ Hope Lutheran 7:00 p.m.	29 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace Lutheran 11:30 a.m.		

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH COUNCIL

JANUARY 16, 2024

Grace Lutheran Church Council met on January 16, 2024. The meeting was called to order by President Bret Wellensiek. Pastor opened with prayer. Council members present were Bret Wellensiek, Mike Weber, and Cheryl Grundman. Also in attendance was Pastor Jim Helgren and Diane Wilken-church secretary/treasurer. Absent were Erin Ebeler and Sarah Purcell.

Previous Month's Minutes and Treasurer's Report

Motion by Cheryl Grundman and second by Mike to approve December 19, 2023, minutes. Motion carried.

The account balances as of December 31, 2023, were reviewed.

Motion by Mike Weber to accept Treasurer's Report, second by Cheryl Grundman. Motion carried.

Pastor's Report

1. Provided December visits.
2. Reviewed February 2024 Lenten Schedule: Ash Wednesday Feb 14 @ Hope, Feb 21 @ Grace, and Feb 28 @ Hope. Services at 7:00 PM.
3. In addition to Wednesday services, Grace will host luncheon-based services on Thursdays. The lunch will be prepared by Eleta Eisenhower. The fellowship lunch will start at 11:30 with worship at approximately 12:10. February dates are the 15th, 22nd, and 29th. Everyone is invited, particularly senior citizens who prefer not to go out at night.
4. February is donation of Socks, Undies, Gloves/Mittens in all sizes for the People City Mission. A basket will be available every Sunday in February for the collection of these items.
5. Grand View University, Des Moines IA will host a cost-free training program, FAITH FORWARD-FAMILIES PASSING FAITH ON. Pastor will attend the program April 29 - 30, 2024. The cost for Grace will be mileage and lodging. Pastor will present the program to Grace after we have celebrated our 75th anniversary in June.
6. Church cancellation due to blizzard conditions will be open for discussion at the annual meeting.

Committee Reports

Property: Thank you to Arlin Brinkman and Brian Mannschreck for snow removal from the parking lot and sidewalks. Stained glass window repairs should be completed within 45 days.

Worship/Evangelism/Music/Fellowship: Lisa Weber and Sarah Purcell are working together to make a Photo bulletin board with those who worship at Grace Lutheran. The first set of pictures have been taken and printed. The snow and cold have delayed the installation of the bulletin board pictures. Pictures will be taken again at the end of February. The **75th Anniversary Celebration** Committee met January 3, 2024; the highlights include: The menu was decided. The mementos were finalized. The contract with the school was being handled. The next meeting is February 19, 2024.

Parish Education/Youth: no report

Stewardship: no report

Church duty: January and the first two Sundays in February are covered. We need more members to participate and be willing to assist with church duty.

There were no additions added to the annual meeting agenda. Concerns were expressed regarding who would be willing to serve on church council.

Diane Wilken was granted permission to purchase stamps before the next increase in postage prices.

The meeting was adjourned by President Wellensiek and closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl Grundman



A thank you was received from Bridges to Hope for our donation of 26 quilts in 2023. These quilts were actually donated to Bud's Thrift Shoppe and were sold with the proceeds going to Bridges for Hope. Bridges for Hope is there to serve and encourage men and women transitioning back into the community after incarceration, as they become successful contributors to society. Bridges to Hope provide basic household furnishings, clothing, and personal hygiene products at no cost to the men and women they serve.

2024 Annual Meeting

January 21, 2024

President Bret Wellensiek called the meeting to order on January 21, 2024, following worship service. There were 27 members in attendance. The meeting was opened with a prayer led by Pastor Helgren.

Cheryl Grundman moved to accept the 2023 Minutes from the 2023 annual meeting. Jody Wellensiek seconded the motion. Minutes approved.

Pastor presented his report.

- Learning Communities – Will be on Wednesdays, beginning April 10, 2024, with the topic of “Liturgy of Natural World.” Pastor will sign up, and all are welcome to join.
- Faith Forward. The goal is to help parents and grandparents pass on their faith to their children and grandkids.
 - ◊ April 29 and 30, 2024 – training for Pastor if his application is accepted.
 - ◊ \$500 for kick-off event will hopefully be granted.
- During 2024, the “GO AND...” series will continue, and Grace will continue to participate.
- Pastor discussed our continued use of social media to present church services simultaneously with live attendance. He noted that we encourage/allow at-home viewers to prayerfully engage in communion while watching church services regardless of whether done on Sunday morning or while watching service three days later at a time that works in the viewer’s schedule.
- Lenten lunches will be hosted at Grace Lutheran on Thursdays. He will present his sermon from the Wednesday night before. Hope Lutheran is invited to attend the lunches, as are all members of the community.

Bret Wellensiek reviewed the statistical report and presented his President’s Report.

The Treasurer’s Report, Benevolence Giving Report, and Budget Report were reviewed. Questions were asked and answered.

Other Reports reviewed and opened for discussion included the following:

- Financial Secretary’s Report
- Sunday School Report
- Kids for Christ Report—Many thanks to all who assist with those programs. Erin Ebeler noted that during the Summer 2023 state synod meeting, many other churches were interested in learning more about our Kids for Christ program.
- Memorial Committee
- Property Committee
- Worship, Evangelism, and Fellowship Committee
- Community Christmas Cantata
- Women of Grace Lutheran 2023 Report and Women’s Stewardship Report
- 75th Anniversary Committee
- Audit Report – Thanks to Lori Panko for her work on reviewing the churches financials.

Pastor reported on the work of the Cluster.

75th Anniversary Committee

- General offering during service will go to the Osage Food Bank and Mission Field Nebraska.
- The Committee would like Grace Lutheran to authorize payment for the meal.
 - ◇ Discussion was held about whether there would be a free will donation accepted to offset the cost of the meal.
 - ◇ The 75th Anniversary Committee will re-evaluate if/how a free will offering will be asked for and present their recommendation to Church Council for approval. Alta Bohling seconded. Motion carried.

A discussion and vote were held on the number of Council Members. Paul Wilken moved to keep the number of Council Members at 5. Gene Ekhoﬀ seconded. Motion carried.

Bret thanked the council members whose service had ended, Erin Ebeler & Mike Weber.

Cheryl Grundman agreed to serve for another one-year term.

Two Two-Year Terms

Jody Wellensiek agreed to serve one of the two-year terms.

One 2 year term remains open at this time. It will be announced at next church service and members are encouraged to volunteer.

Diane Wilken moved to cease nominations. Karen Cerny seconded. Motion carried.

Paul and Diane Wilken volunteered to serve as delegates to the Nebraska Synod Assembly (June 1-2) at the Younes Center in Kearney, NE. Julie Eﬀken moved to close nominations. Jody Wellensiek seconded. Motion carried.

Rich and Joyce Roesener were elected as financial secretaries.

Melissa Wellensiek was elected as Sunday School Superintendent.

Roster of electees was approved by acclamation.

The proposed budget for 2024 was discussed. Questions were asked and answered. Julie Eﬀken moved to approve the 2024 budget. Karen Cerny seconded. Motion carried.

Discussion was held about future weather-based cancelations. If congregation members have suggestions on how to better communicate those in the future, they're encouraged to bring those to a Council member.

Paul Wilken moved to close the meeting. Gene Ekhoﬀ seconded.

Meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted, Erin Ebeler

Heartfelt Thoughts and Prayers Go to...

Kirk & Robyn Faris & Families

Kirk's father Billy Faris passed away on January 26th and his funeral was held on January 31st in Plattsmouth, NE

Bob & Judy Schmidt & family

Judy's sister Barbara "Bobbi" Mueller passed away on January 19th. Her funeral was held at First Lutheran (North Branch), Avoca on January 25th.

Beth & Terry Panko & family

Beth's father Richard Hauberg passed away on Sunday, January 28th. His funeral will be held on Saturday, February 2nd at Faith Lutheran, Talmage



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