



Tower Echoes 2025

From the Pastor,

“From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised.” ESV Psalm 113:3 This was the VBS bible verse for the week. There was also a different daily bible verse read everyday.

When we wake up we get to praise God that we didn't wake up dead. When we lie down to sleep we can praise God that we made it through the day. One of the gifts given to us from God is the opportunity from sunrise to sunset to observe God's actions in our life and praise God about them.

Thanks and praise go hand in hand. When I count a notice of blessing from God, then I can thank God for it. But that thanks can lead to praise. When I praise God for something like a beautiful sunset, often that praise leads to thanking God for the sunset.

Seeking reasons to thank and praise God can help us put our lives in a different perspective. My knee hurts the most when I stand up after I have been sitting. While sitting I can praise God my knee does not hurt. When I get up and the pain ramps up I can praise God that I didn't fall down and I am able to move. The longer I walk the less the pain, Praise God.

There are reasons the complaint about one's life but I prefer to seek more reasons to praise and thank God.

Pastor Jim

BACKPACK BLESSING

The new tradition at Grace & Hope of blessing the student backpacks will be during each worship service on August 10th to kick off the school year. Students, any age should bring their backpacks to church that morning to bless them and students will receive a backpack tag.

Church Seasons: We remain in the Church Season of Time (Sundays) after Pentecost. The Sunday texts teach and challenge us to be Christlike.

Church Festival days: August 15 - Mary, Mother of Our Lord
August 24 - Bartholomew, Apostle

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

8/2 - Kirk & Robyn Faris
8/3 - Kate & Russ Dietz
8/5 - Makenzie & Gabe Hoins
8/7—Bret & Melissa Wellensiek
8/22 - Richard & Joyce Roesener
(60th Anniversary)
8/24 - Allison & Mike Bousquet
8/31 - Kurt & Julie Effken

School Kit items for Lutheran World Relief are being collected. The items needed are: 70 sheet spiral notebooks (4 each school kit), Boxes of 16 or 24 crayons, Ball point Pens, Unsharpened #2 Pencils, and Blunt Scissors. School Sales are happening! Donations are welcome to help purchase the items and Thrivent Action team funds will help fill these back packs.

AUGUST

BIRTHDAYS

8th - Diane Ekhoff
Ryan Weber
Madison Lang
Violet Wellensiek
9th - Diane Smith
12th - Lucas Cropp
13th - Hayden Wellensiek
14th - Carolyn Cropp
15th - Charlotte Wellensiek
16th - Mackenzie Hoins
17th - Melissa Wellensiek
19th - Lee Cannon
28th - Bruce Armknecht
Travis Effken
30th - Michael Purcell

Confirmation Begins

There will be a confirmation student/parents meeting on August 27 at 7:00 p.m. in the basement of Grace Lutheran Church. It is for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grade. We will discuss class requirements, day and time we will meet, and just get reacquainted.

Confirmation is to start on September 3rd, time to be determined.

August 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion	4 5 6 7	8 9				
10 8:30 am Worship Blessing of Backpacks	11 12 Bible Study 2:00 p.m.	13 14	15 16			
17 8:30 am Worship w/ Communion	18 19 Church Council 7:00 p.m.	20 21	22 23			
24 8:30 am Worship	25 26	27 28	29 30			
31						

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL – The theme for VBS 2025 was WONDER JUNCTION, marvel at Jesus, live for His glory. Each evening, June 14 – June 18 the 30 students participated in five activities 1) music, 2) lesson 3) craft, 4) meal, and 5) outdoor activity. Those of you who have Facebook enjoyed Erin Ebeler's daily post. Thank you, Erin! A huge THANK YOU for all the volunteers. Most of the volunteers were able to be in attendance every day. The participants were able to have one on one when and where needed. Many of the volunteers who assisted were encouraged by another volunteer. Volunteers: Alta Bohling, Sharon Carman, Lisa Cropp, Lucas Cropp, Erin Ebeler, Kris Ebeler, Cheryl Grundman, Braxton Goracke, Carley Goracke, Scott Herman, Pastor Ken, Pastor Jim, Kenna Thomas, Kathy Scheer, Mackenzie Sell, Jody Wellensiek, Melissa Wellensiek, Nicole Wellensiek, Riley Wellensiek, and TyLynn Wellensiek. It was an amazing week.

Submitted by Cheryl Grundman





Grace Lutheran Church Council

July 21, 2025

The regular meeting of the Grace Lutheran Church Council was called to order by President Cheryl Grundman at 7:00 pm – Robin Eggleston, Sarah Purcell, Jody Wellensiek & Cheryl Grundman present – Mike Carman excused. Pastor Helgren led with an opening prayer.

Minutes of the June 2025 meetings were reviewed. Sarah Purcell made corrections to dates listed and then motioned to accept and Robin Eggleston second. Minutes approved.

The Treasurer's report was reviewed. Treasurer Diane Wilken was called for clarification on items. Sara motioned to accept the treasurer's report, Robin second, motion carried.

Correspondence

Nebraska ELCA Synod correspondence received regarding an organization claiming to call themselves Lutheran Congregational Support Network. This organization has resources they claim are designed to support congregations. The Synod expressed serious concerns regarding these materials and the inaccuracies and misinterpretations provided. Congregational members are encouraged to contact their church leadership with questions.

Communication received from ELCA asking for continued support.

Pastor's report:

June visits reported on shut-ins, hospitalized.

Confirmation camp attended 6/15 - 6/20.

Led worship at Orchard Park on 7/10.

Will lead worship at Linden View on 6/30.

Vacation Bible School was July 14th – 18th. 5:30 – 7:45 pm. Very successful – up to 32 young people involved.

Cook Community worship in park on July 20th.

Pastor's vacation 7/22 – 7/30. Pastor Kate will cover while on vacation. 316-371-0803.

August 10th – Blessing of Backpacks PreK – college.

10/20 – 10/22 Fall Leadership Conference – Kearney. Inclusiveness/Boundary Workshop.

July 27th PMA Fred Bredehoeft will lead joint worship at Hope at 10:00 am.

Hope is having discussions regarding being a House Church.

8/7/25 Meeting is scheduled for 3 Homework committees to meet with church councils to discuss direction for future.

Property - (Robin chair)

Trees at parsonage have been trimmed. Glass replaced for light. Weeds sprayed

Worship, Evangelism & Fellowship (Sarah Chair) –

Diane Ekhoff reported on Synod Convention.

Blessing of the backpacks scheduled for August 10th prior to the start of the school year.

Prayer approved for Native Peoples.

Parish Ed & young people – (Mike Chair)

VBS – 31 children attended at least a portion of the week with lots of helpers. Water games were on Friday. Pictures posted to Facebook.

Kids for Christ – Pastor, Colleen Naber and Cheryl Grundman – programs, Music – Sarah Purcell and Erin Ebeler, Crafts - Lisa and Bailey Cropp, Meals – Andrea Eggleston, Carl Purcell and Lucas Cropp. Erin E - Social Media, Sarah – consent forms needed. Will be held on 2nd and 4th Wednesday – with breaks on 11/26 and 12/24. First session will be on 9/10/25.

Stewardship & Memorial – (Jody Chair)

No report

Old Business

Thank you to Gene and Diane Ekhoff for attending and reporting on Synod Convention, Dean and Rich for setting up for worship in park, Brian Mannschreck for spraying weeds and everything else he does, Dave Smith for maintaining our beautiful church lawn.

New Business

Propane Bids reviewed. Jody motioned and Robin 2nd to increase the contracted amount to 2800 gal.

Mission Festival/40th Anniversary of Ordination/70th Birthday.

Potluck dinner planned – Council will provide meat and bread – everyone is invited to provide a covered dish or two to share. Pastor Helgren will be our speaker on this special service – October 5th at 10 am. Cheryl Grundman will explore inviting neighboring churches and former congregations where Pastor has served.

Duty Roster - covered by council for coming month – volunteers needed for future dates.

Next meeting – Monday, August 18, 2025, at 7 pm.

Meeting adjourned with Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Jody Wellensiek

June 27, 2025



6757 Newport Avenue, Suite 200
Omaha, NE 68152-2191

402.896.5311
FAX 402.896.5354

www.nebraskasynod.org

Beloved of Christ in the Nebraska Synod,

Over the last few months, an organization calling itself the Lutheran Congregational Support Network (LCSN) has created a host of resources which they claim are intended to support congregations in their relationship with synods and the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). I'm writing to you today to address their core questions, correct some misinformation, and encourage you to contact the Nebraska Synod office if you have further questions that are not addressed in this letter.

The LCSN website identifies three core questions for ELCA congregations:

1. *Who controls your governing documents?*
2. *Does your congregation have sole control over its property?*
3. *Is your pastor free to say what she/he believes?*

There is nothing wrong with asking these questions. I'm happy to give you my answers here.

1. Who controls your governing documents?

From the earliest days of the ELCA, our church has been interdependent in nature. The Model Constitution for Congregations was included in the original governing documents of the ELCA, and ELCA congregations have always been required to adopt the Model Constitution whenever they update their local constitution. However, aside from those provisions required by the Model Constitution, congregations can structure their governing documents in any way they please so long as they don't contradict the Model Constitution. In the Nebraska Synod, we have a Constitutional Review Team who work with congregations to help them amend and adopt governing documents which reflect the congregation's context, needs, and resources and our shared commitment to interdependence across the ELCA. The aim is consistency, not control.

2. Does your congregation have sole control over its property?

The short answer to this question is, "Yes!" A fuller answer is, "Yes - assuming your congregation is acting in accordance with your constitution." There are constitutional provisions under which the Synod Council (not the bishop or the synod office) may act to place a congregation under synod administration, but those provisions only address situations in which a congregation is either unable to govern itself or is blatantly violating its constitution. Some hypothetical examples might be 1) a congregation that can no longer maintain its building or ministry; 2) congregations facing legal action due to misconduct of ministers, staff, or volunteers; 3) congregations in deep, prolonged internal conflict. Synod administration has never been enacted in the Nebraska Synod, and across the ELCA it has been enacted in only the most extreme instances. Administration can also be appealed. In all but the most extreme circumstances, ELCA congregations control their property. My role as bishop is to help congregations manage their property and ministry in accordance with their governing documents, for the sake of consistency, not control.

3. Is your pastor free to say what she/he believes?

ELCA rostered ministers (deacons and pastors) are not completely free to say whatever they believe. Our ordination vows are clear: rostered ministers of the ELCA must preach and teach in accordance with Holy Scripture, the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles' Creeds, and the Lutheran Confessions. Sermons, public statements, or other messages which violate our common understanding of Scripture, creeds and confessions can be cause for disciplinary action. An ELCA rostered minister is not free to pray, preach, or teach in the name of Ba'al, Zeus, or Osiris, for example. However, Lutherans are a people of faith who value bold questions and courageous discourse, particularly on those issues which are neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture, creed, and confession. We encourage our rostered ministers to be forthright and honest. The ELCA has adopted social statements, messages, and policy resolutions over time which inform and guide our public witness as a community of moral deliberation, but their status is one of support and discernment, not enforced subscription. Neither I nor any other bishop of the ELCA are called to be the thought police of the synod's rostered ministers. The church is united by the Holy Spirit, not by the imposition of one political, sociological, or ecclesiastical viewpoint.

So, having answered these questions, I'd like to ask a few of my own. What is the Lutheran Congregational Support Network? Who are the persons making these accusations about the ELCA? The LCSN claims they have analyzed ELCA documents, interviewed pastors, and sought extensive legal counsel regarding the ELCA's shift. Who are the legal experts providing counsel to this network? The assertions presented by the LCSN are riddled with inaccuracies and misinterpretations, and also sorely lacking in cited sources or acknowledgment of authorship. Why should congregations believe such unsubstantiated and anonymous allegations, particularly when the concerns raised by the LCSN can easily be addressed by a call to the synod office?

Having been an ELCA pastor for almost 22 years, and an actively engaged member of this church for over 30 years, I am well aware that we are a denomination that is still learning how to live well together. In the 36 years since the merger that created the ELCA, we have changed in many ways, but there are also lingering issues that continue to plague us. One of them is deep suspicion of bishops, the presiding bishop, and the churchwide organization. I can assure you that bishops can and do make mistakes. Living in relationship means living with people who will disappoint, confound, and wound us. However, the true mark of faithful Christian community is confessing our sins, owning our mistakes, and being people of forgiveness and integrity. I don't see integrity in the anonymous accusations levied by the LCSN. I see a determined effort to create suspicion and division through misinterpretation and misinformation.

The prophet Zechariah reminded his listeners that God intends for us to be a people of truth and accountability: "these are the things that you shall do: speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace..." (Zechariah 8:16) Friends, I am more than happy to discuss any concerns about the ELCA with anyone at any time, and I pledge to you that I will be as forthright and honest as I can be about the future of our church as I see it. Let's put our trust in each other as we live together in this church God has entrusted to us.

With gratitude and hope,



Bishop Scott Alan Johnson

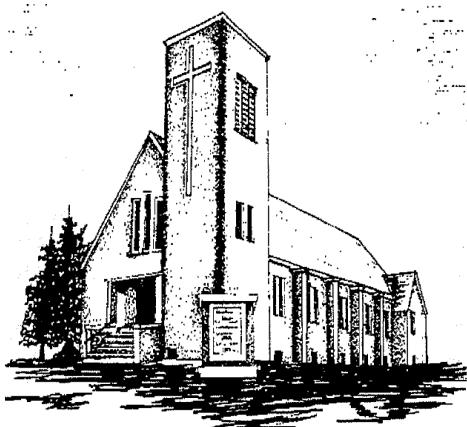
Hello August

May God's Word be a guiding light
for your path, illuminating every
step with His wisdom and love.

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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