



TOWER
ECHOES
2026

From the Pastor,

How is your Lenten journey going? Mine is going as planned so far, since I am writing this the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday.

My plan is to try to use Lent to lose two pounds and get to and retain 179 pounds. The plan is to eat less sweets and not replace the six beers in my refrigerator once they are gone, until after Easter. I plan to add at least one devotional to my religious time each day. I hope to be more intentional about adding what Christians refer to as contemplation somewhere to my weekly schedule. Since contemplation is just being in the presence of God and not saying or thinking anything, one can probably see the challenge for me.

What are your plans for Lent? Some people fast for Lent. That way means giving up a particular food or skipping lunch or another meal. I read a few years ago that biblically it could simply mean a vegan diet and not meaning not eating anything. Eating meat and drinking milk was considered luxuries one ate in celebration or times of plenty.

A friend of mine heard God tell him in his prayer time that if he wanted God to bring the religious renewal to his town as he was praying for them, he needed to fast for forty days. My friend sought my advise on the matter. It was after I left Wilber that I discovered that God probably was not asking this overweight man to starve himself to death but only eat a vegan diet for forty days. Last time I saw him seventeen years ago, he still had not started his fast.

Lent is a time for us to focus on being closer to God. We even added a Wednesday/Thursday worship service to help with the attempt. I wish you God's peace as you/we walk in our Lenten journey.

Pastor Jim

World Day of Prayer

March 6, 2026. at 2:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, Cook, NE. Come join us for the afternoon. Guest speakers will be Linda (Antholz) & Tom Gapp. They will share information about their many trips to Tanzania.

Everyone is welcome to attend—please bring a friend. Dessert & coffee will be served.

MISSION STATEMENT

One of the questions the Hope workbook committee was asked if Grace had a Mission Statement. Pastor explained that we have an unofficial mission statement that is on the front of the non-communion Sunday bulletin. The 2026 Church Council voted to adopt this statement as Grace Lutheran's Mission Statement or Statement of Faith.

By Grace you have been saved! "We have decided to follow Jesus and there's no turning back!"

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

with your Nebraska Synod Staff

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH , COOK APRIL 18, 2026 SATURDAY 10AM-3PM

TRAVELING TOGETHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

DO YOU WONDER ABOUT THE FUTURE OF GOD'S CHURCH?

DO YOU FEEL LIKE WE DON'T MEASURE UP TO WHAT THE CHURCH USED TO BE?

ARE YOU TROUBLED BY AGING BUILDINGS AND UNUSED FACILITIES?

DOES IT FEEL LIKE ALL THE CHURCH TALKS ABOUT IS PAYING THE BILLS?

DO YOU WANT TO BE THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS IN YOUR COMMUNITY BUT AREN'T SURE HOW TO GET STARTED?

If you answered YES to ANY of the above questions, this event is for YOU!

"I am because we are." This isn't synod staff coming to you. This is an opportunity for all of us to come together with Jesus. In this time, we will learn about how the church is already changing and what the road ahead might look like for all of us. We will ponder what faithful innovation looks like in your community and how to pack your bags with actionable steps to bring back home. You'll have the opportunity to meet Synod Council members, Cluster Deans, and other local companions who are journeying with you on the way. Learn More & Register

<https://nebraskasynod.wufoo.com/forms/pikdmxo0qbtz/bk/>

**Let us imagine the
Adventure that awaits us
as we travel this road as
ONE Church Together!**

There will be a training session on Sunday, March 22nd at 4:00 p.m. to be held at Grace Lutheran Church for Grace and Hope members interested in helping to lead worship in the future through reading scripture, leading worship and/or presenting sermons or messages. We will begin with an introduction and practice session and go from there. It will be lead by Pastor.

There will also be an introductory session concerning member visitation by Grace and Hope members on March 23rd at 2-3 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, lead by Pastor. We will discuss the various types of visits, and which types each person is comfortable doing.

March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:30 am Worship w/Communion 9:30 am Sunday School	2	3 Piecemakers Blanket Making	4 Lenten Worship @ Hope 7:00 p.m.	5 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace 11:30 a.m	6 World Day of Prayer @ Grace 2:00 pm	7
8 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School	9 Grace & Hope Bible Study 2:00 pm	10 Piecemakers Blanket Making Sharing Salad Luncheon	11 Kids for Christ 4:00 pm Grace Confirmation Lenten Worship @ Grace 7:00 pm	12 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace 11:30 a.m	13	14 ELCW Spring Gathering @ St Paul's, Falls City
15 8:30 am Worship w/Communion 9:30 am Sunday School	16	17 Piecemakers Blanket Making Church Council 7:00 p.m.	18 Lenten Worship @ Hope Lutheran 7:00 p.m.	19 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace 11:30 a.m	20	21
22 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School	23	24 Piecemakers Blanket Making	25 Kids for Christ 4:00 pm Grace Confirmation Lenten Worship @ Grace 7:00 pm	26 Thursday Lenten Gathering @ Grace 11:30 a.m	27	28
29 PALM SUNDAY 8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Sunday School	30	31 Piecemakers Blanket Making				

Wednesday Midweek Lenten Worship Service Schedule.

All services are at 7:00 p.m.

The midweek Wednesday Service theme will be the ELCA and Nebraska Synod material taken from Sundays and Seasons entitled “Conversations with Jesus; Service of Word for Lent”. We will discuss the conversations that Jesus has with others in the previous Sunday’s Gospel.

The Thursday Luncheon Midweek Worship includes the worship and theme from the night before and lunch. People may begin gathering at 11:30 a.m. Worship will begin at 11:45 a.m. with lunch being served 11:47 a.m.—12:15 p.m. The service will continue following eating of the meal. People may arrive and leave as their schedules permit.

March 4 - Wednesday Midweek at Hope “Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus”

March 5 - Thursday Luncheon service @ Grace gather beginning @ 11:30 a.m.

March 11 - Wednesday Midweek at Grace “Jesus’ conversation with the woman at the well”

March 12 - Thursday Luncheon service @ Grace gather beginning @ 11:30 a.m.

March 18 - Wednesday Midweek at Hope “Jesus’ conversation with the disciples and the man born blind”

March 19 - Thursday Luncheon service @ Grace gather beginning @ 11:30 a.m.

March 25 - Wednesday Midweek at Grace “Jesus’ conversation with Martha”

March 26 - Thursday Luncheon service @ Grace gather beginning @ 11:30 a.m.

HOLY WEEK

April 2 - Holy Thursday/Maundy Thursday at Grace. 7:00 p.m. with personal absolution and Holy Communion and First Communion for Grace Lutheran 4th & 5th Graders.

April 3 - Good Friday at Hope 7:00 p.m.

April 5 - Easter/Resurrection of Our Lord

Grace Lutheran - 8:30 a.m. Hope Lutheran - 10:00 a.m.

Grace Lutheran Church Council

February 17, 2026

The regular meeting of the Grace Lutheran Church Council was called to order by President Cheryl Grundman at 7:02 pm – Members present: Cheryl Grundman, Mike Carman, Ryan Panko, Jody Wellensiek, Lisa Weber, Owen Weber (Luther League Representative) and Diane Wilken (Church Treasurer). Mike Carman- excused. Pastor Helgren led with an opening prayer.

Jody Wellensiek has agreed to fill in on the council for Sarah Purcell for 3 months.

Minutes of the January 2026 meetings were reviewed. Ryan Panko motioned to accept and Owen Weber second. Minutes approved.

The Treasurer's report was reviewed. Jody Wellensiek motioned to accept the treasurer's report, Ryan Panko second, motion carried.

Correspondence: A grant money check for \$500 was received from the NE Synod. The grant money is to support the Osage Food Pantry.

Pastor's report:

January visits reported on shut-ins, hospitalized.

The Pastor's discretionary fund was used on January 5 to assist in paying an OPPD bill. The remaining balance of the discretionary fund is \$942.64.

Pastor led worship at Orchard Park on February 19 and Linden View on February 25.

Pastor attended a zoom meeting on "Preparing Your Congregation for Your Retirement".

Step stools have been donated for use in each bathroom to aid small children in handwashing.

Ash Wednesday service will be held at Hope on February 18.

Baptism of Rutledge and Maggie Finke will be on February 22. Laura Finke will join in membership before the baptisms.

Lenten services at Grace will be at 7:00pm on February 25, March 11 and March 25. Luther League will provide snacks for fellowship.

A candle table will be placed in the back of the church for use during Lent. The candle table will remain set up in the back of the church for the duration of the Lenten season.

Thursday Lenten Luncheons will continue each Thursday following Lenten worships.

World Day of Prayer will be at Grace on March 6 at 2pm.

First Communion Classes at Grace will be in March, with First Communion service during Maundy Thursday at Grace at 7:00pm on April 2.

The Hometown Fresh Program through the Lincoln Food Bank that requested the use of our parking lot has been delayed until 2027.

The church phone system has been updated to fiberoptic.

Pastor has registered for Synod Assembly May 29-31.

Pastor has registered for a required Inclusivity Workshop May 29th

Pastor suggested we officially adopt a mission statement: By Grace you have been saved! "We have decided to follow Jesus and there's no turning back!" Motion made by Owen Weber to adopt the mission statement, Jody Wellensiek second. Motion approved.

Property - (Mike and Ryan co-chairs) Sporhase completed furnace work. Work continues on the water line leak. It was noted this will be expensive.

Worship, Evangelism & Fellowship - (Jody Chair) –Worship Setting will not change until Pentecost.

Parish Ed & Young People – (all co-chairs)

Luther League will provide snacks for fellowship following Lenten Worship services at Grace.

Stewardship & Memorial – (Lisa Chair)

Name plates for 2025 were installed on the Memorial Board.

Old Business

“On The Road Again” will be held at Grace on April 18. This gathering is open to all SE NE clusters. We still need volunteers to attend Synod Assembly May 29-31. The deadline is approaching to register for the discounted rate. Full pricing begins in April. It was noted there is no new information about a possible 3 Point Ministry.

New Business

“Coffee, Chaos and Church” will be held on April 17 at Grace from 10:00am-2:00pm. This meeting is for church administrators.

Council discussed the need to form a committee to study insurance options for the church property. Ryan Panko motioned to hire NeXt-gen Cleaning (Amanda Gerking) for cleaning services. Owen Weber second. Motion approved.

Jody Wellensiek motioned to designate Easter Offering toward the water line repair. Ryan Panko second. Motion approved.

Pastor will hold a Lay Leader Training at Grace on March 22nd at 4:00pm and a Lay Visitation Training at Grace on March 23rd at 2:00pm. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the back of the church for anyone interested. More training will happily be offered later if interested.

Thank you to Dave Smith for assisting with the water line issue.

Thank you to Gene and Diane Ekhoﬀ for volunteering for worship duty during Lent.

Thank you to Gene Ekhoﬀ for installing the memorial plaque name plates.

Next meeting – March 17, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Weber



Let
ALL THAT
YOU DO
BE DONE IN
Love

1 CORINTHIANS 16:14

Grace Lutheran Church

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