

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

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“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (Ps. 46:1, 11 ESV)

Dear Friends in Christ:

The word “unprecedented” has been used a lot lately to describe the current coronavirus pandemic. The almost total shutdown of our society, including the cancellation of church services, in the attempt to slow down the spread of the virus is certainly unprecedented in my lifetime. I pray that this crisis ends quickly, that these preventative measures are successful, and that our lives and church activities can return to normal soon.

Although this may be an unprecedented time for us, history teaches us that we are not the first to suffer the effects of a pandemic. About 100 years ago, the world suffered the ravages of the 1918 influenza pandemic (also known as the Spanish flu). It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world’s population at that time became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States.¹ As devastating as that disease was, however, the world and the United States recovered from it. As we celebrated last year, our church was founded in 1919 (in the aftermath of that terrible pandemic), and by God’s grace, we are still here today.

Four hundred years earlier, Martin Luther and the people of Germany dealt with the effects of an even deadlier disease. In the fall of 1527, the bubonic plague broke out in Luther’s town of Wittenberg. Some 180 years before then, the plague, also known as the Black Death, resulted in the deaths of an estimated 75 to 200 million people in Eurasia from 1347 to 1351. About 30 to 60 percent of Europe’s total population was killed at that time. Smaller outbreaks of the plague occurred throughout Europe until the early 20th century.²

Life was already difficult for Luther when the plague broke out in Wittenberg. In August 1527, a man who followed Luther’s teaching was martyred for his faith. A few months later, in December 1527, his daughter Elizabeth was born in poor health, and she died six months later. During these dark days, Luther wrote about himself: “We are all in good health except for Luther himself, who is physically well, but outwardly the whole world and inwardly the devil and all his angels are making him suffer.”³

With death and disease all around him, Luther took comfort in the Psalms and in the promises of Jesus. It was during this time that he wrote his most famous hymn, based on Psalm 46, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (*LSB* 656). Nearly 500 years later, we still sing his great hymn of comfort and triumph in Jesus, especially in the face our own trials and struggles, including now with this coronavirus pandemic.

1 A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev’ry need
That hath us now o’ertaken.
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

2 With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord,
And there’s none other God;
He holds the field forever.

3 Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

4 The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
Though these all be gone,
Our victory has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

Text: Public domain

Yes, this is an unprecedented time for us. But these kinds of crises and pandemics are not unprecedented in the history of the world. God was with His people then in their times of trial and need, and He is with us today. He promises never to leave us or forsake us. He sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Jesus paid for your sins and mine and the sins of the whole world by His death on the cross, so that by faith in Him we are healed in body and soul. Even when death comes for us, death is not the end for us. Because Jesus died and rose again, we, too, have the promise of the resurrection of our own body and life forever in the new creation when Jesus returns to make all things new.

May God hasten the day when sin, sorrow, sickness, disease, coronavirus, and death will be no more. Until then, as Luther and the saints did before us, we join our voices in proclaiming the wonderful Good News that because of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, "our victory has been won; the Kingdom ours remaineth!"

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian Crane

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-pandemic-h1n1.html>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death

³ "A Mighty Fortress," Dr. Albert B. Collver (<https://lutheranreformation.org/history/a-mighty-fortress>)

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

Last night, members of Grace's Church Council, Board of Elders, and I met to discuss the coronavirus situation. Based on the orders and recommendations of our government and public safety officials, most church activities, including public worship services, have been canceled at Grace indefinitely. We will reassess the situation in the coming weeks to determine when and how we can resume these activities. At a minimum, our public worship services cannot resume until the State of Wisconsin rescinds its moratorium on mass gatherings of 10 people or more.

During this time, recordings of my sermons will be available on our website (gracelutheranracine.net) and on our YouTube channel, "Grace Lutheran Church, Racine, WI – LCMS." We will also attempt to livestream our worship services using Facebook Live. We will begin with tonight's Lenten service at 6:30 pm. This service is closed to everyone except me, the organist, the videographer, and perhaps one or two other people to assist with the service and the recording. I have never done this before, but my understanding is that you should be able to watch the service live through Grace's Facebook page. It should then be archived on our Facebook page as well, so that you can view it at a later time. If this experiment works tonight, we will use it on Sunday and for our worship services going forward until we can resume our public worship services again. The worship bulletins and the hymns can be downloaded from our website.

The plan is to keep the church office open during this time. I am willing and available to provide pastoral care to those who need or desire it. Please feel free to contact the church office or me directly if you would like to speak with me or if you would like to stop in to visit me. I will also make home and hospital visits as requested and permitted. The church phone number is 262-633-4831. My cell phone number is 608-567-9029.

The work and ministry of Grace continues during this difficult time. If you are able to do so, please mail your offering checks to Grace. You can also drop them off at the church office. The office is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Electronic giving is also available by contacting the church office. I know that some of you may be impacted financially by this crisis. May God bless and strengthen our individual families and our church family as we try to deal faithfully with these challenges.

Please continue to pray that God would bring a quick end to this crisis according to His good and gracious will. I deeply appreciate your continued prayers for me, that I would remain healthy and able to carry out my duties. I will keep you in my prayers also. Through it all, we rejoice that God is still in control. With His help, I am confident that we will get through this crisis together, as generations of Christians did before us in their own times of trial. As we remember especially during the Lenten and upcoming Easter seasons, Jesus lives; the victory's won!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Crane

FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS

“And, Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight.”
—*When Peace, like a River* (LSB #763)

I wish I had better sight.

I've worn glasses since I was five years old and I've accepted them as a necessary accessory. I wish I could wake up and just see the world around me without fumbling for my glasses. My first-grade teacher told me that she always thought of how I would look in heaven because I wouldn't need my glasses anymore.

There's nothing more reassuring to me than that line about faith and sight from “When Peace, Like a River,” our closing hymn from March 15. Our lives on Earth are spent in hope and trust of what we cannot see. We believe the Word of God. We trust our adoption in the waters of Baptism and the redemption through Jesus' body and blood in Holy Communion. Our hope is in heaven, even when it seems so far from our reality on Earth.

I wish I had better foresight.

Writing this in the middle of March, I have no idea what life will be like for all of us by the time you're reading this. We are already seeing unprecedented measures taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. People are being asked to isolate themselves and avoid meeting together in large groups.

This is where I need to remind myself that Earth is not Heaven. In Heaven, our gatherings will be beyond measure and we will never feel alone. We won't have to believe in our loving Father; we will be with Him all the time, for eternity. The promises of the Bible will be seen by our own eyes.

How do we solve our vision problems? Hebrews 12:2 tells us to “look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.” He will provide us perfect clarity, no matter how obstructed our view of Heaven is here from Earth.

Yours in Christ,
Matthew Olson

FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

On the topic of stewardship, one of the most common questions a person might ask is *not* whether a Christian should give to their church. Everyone knows this. Of course, Christians should give to their church.

The most common question: “How much should I give?” But what they really mean is this: “Should Christians give a tithe of their income to their local congregation?” So, let’s look at why you should or should not tithe.

Following are some reasons often offered for why Christians *shouldn’t* give a tithe to their church.

Some say you shouldn’t tithe because it isn’t expressly commanded in the New Testament. Lacking that command, there is no “Thus saith the Lord” and no “should” for giving a tithe to your congregation.

Others say that Christians give to their congregation in ways much broader than money. They give of their time and their talents, and these, together with treasures (money), add up to more than a tithe.

Still others say they give of their treasures to other things besides their congregation, and they want to support those things alongside their church.

And there are those who think Christians shouldn’t tithe because of fear. If they tithe, they are afraid their gift will be misused, and they are afraid they won’t have enough to get the things they use, want, or need.

Following are some reasons for why Christians *should* give a tithe to their church.

Even though the New Testament doesn’t specifically command Christians to give a tithe, the Old Testament people were commanded to tithe and did. On top of this, St. Paul often describes the giving Christians are to do in similar terms as a tithe: a regular and generous proportion of the first fruits of their income (1 Cor. 6:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:7–23; 2 Cor. 9:2–7).

But here’s another way to think about it. What was the point of the tithe in the Old Testament? Where did it go? The reason for the Old Testament tithe was to support the full ministry of the Levites. They were not given any land because they had no time to farm; their full-time job was the ministry.

What does it say in the New Testament? “The Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should make their living from the Gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). This is the verse that Luther put in the *Small Catechism’s* Table of Duties to cover what Christians owe to the support of the ministry.

It seems clear from both the Old and the New Testaments that the tithe is the goal of Christians in their giving. But what if we’re not there yet? How should we handle this? What are we to do?

Let's answer this by asking a different question about something entirely different. What would you say to your adult children who only attended church quarterly or once a month? There is, after all, no passage in the New Testament that requires Christians to go to church weekly. Hebrews 10:25 is the closest we have, and it states simply for Christians to not neglect gathering together. Even though there is no passage that commands Christians to gather weekly, that is the implicit expectation throughout the Old and New Testaments. It is the goal.

So, what would you say to that son or daughter? I'd expect that conversation would be something like this: "I'm glad you're still going to church. It is a wonderful blessing to hear God's promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation, and to receive His gifts in the Word and the Sacraments. But you can do better, and it will only be a blessing to you. There is a better way, and I'd really like you to try to attain it."

This same conversation is how we should approach the topic of the tithe. It's not specifically commanded in the New Testament, but it sure seems like the implicit expectation of both the Old and New Testaments. So, the church is ecstatic that you're giving when you're giving in all these ways – time, talents, and treasures.

FROM THE PETERS FAMILY

Greetings from the Peters Family at Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana!

Another active academic winter quarter is rapidly coming to a close. I am finishing up Pastoral Theology 1, Dogmatics 3, Theologia 1-Baptism, Renaissance and Reformation, a Greek Readings unit, and my final formal quarter of Field – Ed work at my Field – Ed congregation. (However, I look forward to still helping out and getting some opportunities from time to time.) I wish I could say it went by fast, but with the Christmas break, it really seemed to spread out. However, that does not mean it hasn't been good along the way. All the classes have had good readings to ponder and learn from. The papers have been a good opportunity to think things out on paper. I have also gotten a few more preaching opportunities during midweek services at church. Now, I need to manage the upcoming quarter and look forward to vicarage placement, hopefully coming soon! We have requested a local vicarage to help keep family life as smooth as possible so there is a chance that I may go on a delayed vicarage if a local vicarage is not available this year. If this happens, I will take the regular fourth-year classes next year and do my vicarage in year 4. I am looking forward to being able to use more of what I have learned in the service of Christ's Church.

Martha continues to enjoy teaching second grade at Ascension. In addition to the daily classroom activities, she keeps busy helping in other ways at both church and school. She's offered an afterschool book club for the older kids since she doesn't get to see them on a regular basis and share her love of books. Martha is also in charge of the school's yearbook, so she'll be focused on that for a while. She's active in church and Bible study. Her most demanding job is mainly to be a chauffeur for our kids, since they need to get to various places.

Paul has rediscovered his love of music and piano. He didn't really lose it, but it was put on hold as we didn't have room for a piano in our house. He's found access to a piano lately and has been practicing and discovering new songs. It's been great to listen to! He's looking forward to the upcoming track season at school.

Frederick has just finished his second season of basketball and was sad it was over. He enjoyed learning and growing in his skills this year, and he had good coaches to help him do that. His

academics are always top-notch as he strives to do his best. He's still enjoying playing his saxophone and violin in the band and is also looking forward to the track season.

Russell also finished the basketball season. He and Frederick were on the same team, but Russell was very happy the season was over. It gave him more time to play with his Legos and read books. Russell is probably our most voracious reader, going through books like crazy.

Benjamin is getting so big. He just lost his first teeth (his two front-bottom teeth – he pulled them out all by himself at the same time). He's learning so much at school, and his reading skills are improving. He very much enjoys Kindergarten and loves to play with his friends every day.

We are daily reminded of all the blessings God has graciously shared with us. We are grateful for all the prayers and support we have received during our time here in Fort Wayne!

Blessings,
Seminarian Mark Peters and family

“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” – 1 Cor. 2:2

FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE BOARD OF YOUTH

Youth Schedule (if activities can be held)

April 3 rd (Friday)	Meeting (6:00 PM – 8:30 PM)
April 9 th (Thursday)	Easter Breakfast Setup (5:30 PM – 6:15 PM)
April 12 th (Sunday)	Serve the Easter Breakfast
April 17 th (Friday)	Meeting (6:00 PM – 8:30 PM)
May 3 rd (Sunday)	Brats & Bingo Fundraiser Luncheon (Noon – ?)
May 17 th (Sunday)	Meeting (11:30 AM – 2:00 PM)
May 31 st (Sunday)	Confirmation Sunday

Summer Activities

June 14 th – 17 th	Summer Trip	Creation Museum & Ark Encounter
August 3 rd – 7 th	Splash Canyon VBS	9:00 AM – Noon

The Grace Youth Group will be hosting the annual **Easter Breakfast** on **Easter Sunday, April 12th**, from **7:15 AM to 8:30 AM** in the Fellowship Hall. The menu will be pancakes, sausage, fruit, desserts, and beverages. We hope that you will join us for food and fellowship before the Easter worship service. All freewill donations from the breakfast will be used towards the youth trip this summer to the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum.

Following the worship service on Easter Sunday, the Grace Youth Group would like to invite all kids to join them for an **Easter Egg Hunt!** Depending on the weather, we will have the eggs hidden throughout the building or outside. We will meet in the Fellowship Hall in the basement of church following the service and then will have the egg hunt. Invite your family and friends to church for breakfast and worship and then stay after for the Easter Egg Hunt! Donations of candy and small prizes that would fit in the plastic Easter eggs would be greatly appreciated. They can be brought to church and put by the Sunday School office.

Do you love brats (and hotdogs)? What about playing BINGO? As if those two things aren't amazing...you can do them with your fellow Grace members!!!! On **Sunday, May 3rd**, at **12:00 PM** the Youth Group is hosting a **Brats & Bingo Luncheon**. The menu will be brats & hotdogs with

condiments, baked beans, chips, vegetables & dip, dessert, and drinks. Tickets to the lunch will be sold on Sunday, April 12th, 19th, and 26th. The cost of the tickets is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages four through twelve, and children three-years-old and younger are free. Included in the cost of the ticket is the meal and one Bingo card per game (we will be playing 15 games). If you would like to purchase additional Bingo cards, they will be sold in packs of 15 (one card per game) for \$3 or two packs for \$5. We ask that each person play no more than three cards at a time. Due to the fun and relaxed nature of this luncheon, there will be no cash prizes given out. The winners will receive their choice of a prize from an assortment of prizes.

On **Friday, June 26th**, and **Saturday, June 27th**, Grace is considering hosting a church-wide rummage sale to raise money to help pay off the elevator. To make it successful, we need to ensure there would be plenty of volunteers to help with the rummage sale. This would include setup and pricing during the week, working the days of the sale, and cleaning up afterward. We would be looking for donations from the congregation. The more quality treasures that are donated, the more successful the sale will be. If you would be willing to help with this endeavor, please speak with Laura Olson or sign up on the Office Equipment Room door. Any donations can be brought to church and put in the rooms with the sliding doors on the east side of the Fellowship Hall. More information will follow in bulletins and newsletters.

Save The Date! Splash Canyon **Vacation Bible School** will be taking place **August 3rd – 7th** from **9:00 AM to 12:00 PM**. Vacation Bible School is open to kids three-years-old through sixth grade! Please invite any children you know to come spend the week immersed in God's Word. More information as well as registration forms will be available in upcoming bulletins and newsletters. We hope to see you there. Bring your friends!

Holy Week

(if services can be held)



PALM SUNDAY – APRIL 5TH

9:00 AM – Divine Service with Holy Communion

MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 9TH

6:30 PM – Divine Service with Holy Communion



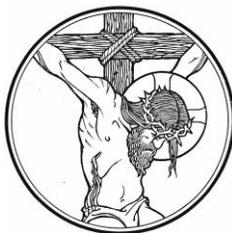
GOOD FRIDAY – APRIL 10TH

12:00 PM – 3:00 PM –

Tre-Ore Service at Racine Lutheran High School

(Pastor Crane will preach and the Grace Choir will sing at 2:00 PM.)

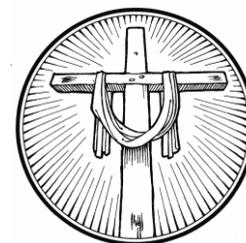
6:30 PM – Tenebrae Vespers Service at
Grace Lutheran Church



EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 12TH

7:15 AM – 8:30 AM Easter Breakfast

9:00 AM Divine Service with Holy Communion



Daily Lectionary Readings

Wednesday, April 1:	Exodus 4:1-18 Mark 15:1-15	Friday, May 1:	Exodus 39:32-40:16 Luke 8:22-39
Thursday, April 2:	Exodus 4:19-31 Mark 15:16-32	Saturday, May 2:	Exodus 40:17-38 Luke 8:40-56
Friday, April 3:	Exodus 5:1-6:1 Mark 15:33-47	Sunday, May 3:	Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36 Luke 9:1-17
Saturday, April 4:	Exodus 7:1-25 Mark 16:1-20	Monday, May 4:	Leviticus 9:1-24 Luke 9:18-36
Sunday, April 5:	Exodus 8:1-32 Hebrews 1:1-14	Tuesday, May 5:	Leviticus 10:1-20 Luke 9:37-62
Monday, April 6:	Exodus 9:1-28 Hebrews 2:1-18	Wednesday, May 6:	Leviticus 16:1-24 Luke 10:1-22
Tuesday, April 7:	Exodus 9:29-10:20 Hebrews 3:1-19	Thursday, May 7:	Leviticus 17:1-16 Luke 10:23-42
Wednesday, April 8:	Exodus 10:21-11:10 Hebrews 4:1-16	Friday, May 8:	Leviticus 18:1-7, 20-19:8 Luke 11:1-13
Thursday, April 9:	Exodus 12:1-28 Hebrews 5:1-14	Saturday, May 9:	Leviticus 19:9-18, 26-37 Luke 11:14-36
Friday, April 10:	Exodus 12:29-32, 13:1-16 Hebrews 6:1-20	Sunday, May 10:	Leviticus 20:1-16, 22-27 Luke 11:37-54
Saturday, April 11:	Exodus 13:17-14:9 Hebrews 7:1-22	Monday, May 11:	Leviticus 21:1-24 Luke 12:1-12
Sunday, April 12:	Exodus 14:10-31 Hebrews 7:23-8:13	Tuesday, May 12:	Leviticus 23:1-22 Luke 12:13-34
Monday, April 13:	Exodus 15:1-18 Hebrews 9:1-28	Wednesday, May 13:	Leviticus 23:23-44 Luke 12:35-53
Tuesday, April 14:	Exodus 15:19-16:12 Hebrews 10:1-18	Thursday, May 14:	Leviticus 24:1-23 Luke 12:54-13:17
Wednesday, April 15:	Exodus 16:13-35 Hebrews 10:19-39	Friday, May 15:	Leviticus 26:1-20 Luke 13:18-35
Thursday, April 16:	Exodus 17:1-16 Hebrews 11:1-29	Saturday, May 16:	Leviticus 26:21-33, 39-44 Luke 14:1-24
Friday, April 17:	Exodus 18:5-27 Hebrews 12:1-24	Sunday, May 17:	Numbers 3:1-16, 39-48 Luke 14:25-15:10
Saturday, April 18:	Exodus 19:1-25 Hebrews 13:1-21	Monday, May 18:	Numbers 8:5-26 Luke 15:11-32
Sunday, April 19:	Exodus 20:1-24 Luke 4:1-15	Tuesday, May 19:	Numbers 9:1-23 Luke 16:1-18
Monday, April 20:	Exodus 22:20-23:13 Luke 4:16-30	Wednesday, May 20:	Numbers 10:11-36 Luke 16:19-31
Tuesday, April 21:	Exodus 23:14-33 Luke 4:31-44	Thursday, May 21:	Numbers 11:1-23, 31-35 Luke 17:1-19
Wednesday, April 22:	Exodus 24:1-18 Luke 5:1-16	Friday, May 22:	Numbers 11:24-29; 12:1-16 Luke 17:20-37
Thursday, April 23:	Exodus 25:1-22 Luke 5:17-39	Saturday, May 23:	Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33 Luke 18:1-17
Friday, April 24:	Exodus 31:1-18 Luke 6:1-19	Sunday, May 24:	Numbers 14:1-25 Luke 18:18-34
Saturday, April 25:	Exodus 32:1-14 Luke 6:20-38	Monday, May 25:	Numbers 14:26-45 Luke 18:35-19:10
Sunday, April 26:	Exodus 32:15-35 Luke 6:39-49	Tuesday, May 26:	Numbers 16:1-22 Luke 19:11-28
Monday, April 27:	Exodus 33:1-23 Luke 7:1-17	Wednesday, May 27:	Numbers 16:23-40 Luke 19:29-48
Tuesday, April 28:	Exodus 34:1-28 Luke 7:18-35	Thursday, May 28:	Numbers 16:41-17:13 Luke 20:1-18
Wednesday, April 29:	Exodus 34:29-35:21 Luke 7:36-50	Friday, May 29:	Numbers 20:1-21 Luke 20:19-44
Thursday, April 30:	Exodus 38:21-39:8, 22-23, 27-31 Luke 8:1-21	Saturday, May 30:	Numbers 20:22-21:9 Luke 20:45-21:19
		Sunday, May 31:	Numbers 21:10-35 Luke 21:20-38