

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH – MISSOURI SYNOD

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April & May 2021

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.”
(Psalm 27:1, 4–5; ESV)

Dear Friends in Christ:

Easter Sunday this year is April 4th. Easter is always a time for the people of God to gather, rejoice, give thanks, and celebrate Christ’s victorious resurrection from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is at the very core of our Christian faith. As St. Paul writes in First Corinthians, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:17, 20; ESV). And, as Jesus Himself said, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19; ESV).

We could not celebrate Easter in church last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting governmental restrictions. Although we were able to livestream the service on Facebook, it is just not the same watching it at home as it is gathering in God’s house with our brothers and sisters in Christ to rejoice and receive His gifts, most especially, Christ’s body and blood in Holy Communion for the forgiveness of our sins.

As we approach this Easter, thankfully the severity of the pandemic has lessened. Vaccines are becoming available for those who wish to receive one. By God’s grace, there seems to be light at the end of this dark tunnel we have been struggling through this past year.

And so, I want to invite and encourage you to come to our Easter worship service on Sunday, April 4th, at 9:00 AM. As I said above, Easter is always a joyous occasion. But, I think it is even more so this year. God indeed does bring light out of darkness and life out of death!

Some of you may be wondering, though, whether it will be safe enough yet to come to church. Of course, I can’t guarantee 100 percent safety. We will continue to take reasonable and prudent safety precautions. As far as I know, no one has become ill by attending worship here at Grace over this past year. (Thanks be to God!) Could it happen, though? Yes. But, then again, when has anything in life been 100 percent safe? Life in this broken world is always filled with some risk. God still commands us to worship Him, though, despite the risks, and to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy (the Third Commandment). As Jesus said, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:35–38; ESV).

My friends, after a long, hard year of COVID-19, I believe it is time for the whole people of God to return to church. I can think of no better day to do so than Easter Sunday. We gather in worship not only for ourselves but also to bear witness to the world of our faith in our resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

If you are not able to attend worship in person, then I would be happy to visit you to share God's Word with you and bring you Holy Communion. Please call or email me, and I will visit you in your home or you can meet with me privately at church. As we seek to care for our physical bodies, we must also tend to our souls as well. Jesus promises, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30; ESV).

May the Good News of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil fill you with joy, hope, and peace this Easter and always! See you soon!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Brian Crane

FROM THE BOARD OF ELDERS

The rituals of Lent that I remember growing up with in the Lutheran church seemed to revolve around self-denial and restraint.

Discussions at the beginning of Lent when I was in grade school often gravitated towards what we were "giving up" for Lent. The vices at that age usually seemed to revolve around candy or soda or television, but the pattern was the same: Establish a goal. Struggle to meet that goal. Be thankful to revert back to normal after Easter.

I can't remember the last thing I tried to "give up" for Lent, but I know I failed at whatever attempt I made. And maybe that's kind of the point that I've been made to understand as I get older: There's nothing wrong with having an intent to improve our behavior, but the truth is that the focus of Lent should be on the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made. A sacrifice we could never live up to, with a result that granted us eternal life we could never earn on our own.

But yet, there is one thing we all refrain from doing from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday, and it's saying or singing "Alleluia" during our church services.

That word translates to "praise the Lord" and is kept out of our liturgy as a recognition of Lent as a somber season. The reemergence of Alleluia on Easter coincides with the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus.

The return of this word to us with Easter feels especially important at this time. We have seen and felt loss and incredible challenges since last Lent. But yet, as with Jesus' sacrifice, God's love and support for us has been unwavering. Even without saying it, we find ourselves with numerous reasons to praise God this Lent and in all times.

These lessons are present even with the youngest members of our church. When our Sunday School children learned about how God provided for Elijah, they sang the song, "God is So Good." That simple song clearly states that God has always provided for us and should always be praised.

The season of Lent is all about promises fulfilled. We almost assuredly will fall short in our promises of what we hope to do. But we have the guarantee of God's infallible love all the time and we will never run out of reasons to say, "praise the Lord."

God's blessings,
Matthew Olson

FROM THE BOARD OF PARISH FELLOWSHIP

ATTENTION: Calling all game lovers!

Beginning **Wednesday, April 21st**, following the Growing Strong with Grace program, we will host our first game-day afternoon of the year. Invite a friend and plan to stick around for even more fellowship and a bit of friendly competition.

Board of Parish Fellowship Wish List (items to be used to make bags for the homeless):

Toothbrushes

Toothpaste

Small shampoo bottles

Soap

Men's and ladies' socks

There will be a box in the coat room to drop off your gifts.

Thank you!

The Board of Parish Fellowship

Holy Week



PALM SUNDAY – MARCH 28TH

9:00 AM - Divine Service with Holy Communion

MAUNDY THURSDAY – APRIL 1ST

6:30 PM - Divine Service with Holy Communion



GOOD FRIDAY – APRIL 2ND

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

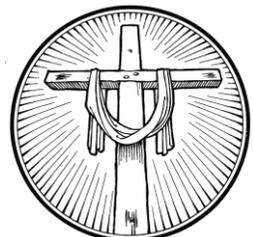
(No Tre Ore service at Racine Lutheran High School)



EASTER SUNDAY – APRIL 4TH

7:00 AM - 8:45 AM Easter Breakfast

9:00 AM Divine Service with Holy Communion



FROM THE BOARD OF YOUTH

Easter Breakfast

Please join us on Easter Sunday, April 4th, for a continental breakfast before the 9:00 AM Easter Worship Service. Breakfast will be served from 7:00 AM – 8:45 AM in the Fellowship Hall. If you plan to join us, please sign up on the Office Equipment Room door so we can plan accordingly. We look forward to seeing you on Easter for breakfast and worship!

Grace Pens and 2021-2022 Pocket Calendars

Grace Pens and 2021 pocket calendars are available in the Office Equipment Room. There are two varieties of pen to choose from: a click, ballpoint pen that has a stylus on the end and a gel pen with a cap. The pens and calendars are \$1 each, with all money going towards the Elevator Fund. The pens include the name of our church and contact information for Grace. They are great for personal use and also could be given to people to invite them to our church!

Sunday School Mission

The Sunday School children chose to have this year's mission offerings help Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) to translate Luther's Small Catechism and Bible storybooks into the languages of children around the world. Working with our Lutheran church partners and missionaries, LHF gives these beautiful full-color Bible story books, free of charge, to the churches and families who need them. Each book is \$5.00, with our goal of being able to provide 30 Bible story books.

We invite the congregation to join us in supporting this wonderful mission project. If you would like to contribute towards this, you can place a donation in the box in the Office Equipment Room or place a donation in an envelope and put it in the Sunday School mailbox.

We look forward to using the gifts we have been given to share the news of Jesus with children throughout the world!

Vacation Bible School

Save The Date! Splash Canyon Vacation Bible School will be taking place July 19th – 23rd from 9:00 AM – Noon. 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, volunteer opportunities, as well as registration forms will be available in upcoming bulletins, newsletters, and the VBS table that will be located near the coat room. Please invite any children you know to come and learn about Jesus and grow in their faith during this fun and exciting week. We hope to see you there. Bring your friends!

We are asking the congregation to please save any large pieces of cardboard you may have. The boxes from appliances and other large items often work really well for the props that are made for VBS.

FROM THE BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Two issues that the congregation will need to address in the near future are the Endowment Fund and the rental houses. Both are assets owned by the church for many years, but not much has been done to utilize them for the purposes intended – very little money has been disbursed from the Endowment Fund to students pursuing a Christian education in church work and the parking lot has still not been put in where the houses are.

Endowment Fund

The Grace Lutheran Church Endowment Fund was established in October of 2002, and \$11,626.65 was transferred from the Bartz Scholarship Fund to the Endowment Fund. Initially, the funds were deposited with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF). At the beginning of 2005, about 90% of the money was transferred to Thrivent Financial. The remaining amount (\$1,773.14) in the LCEF account was disbursed at the end of 2010 and the account closed. To date, that is the only amount of money disbursed from the Endowment Fund for Lutheran education of pastors and teachers.

As of December 31, 2020, a total of \$26,878.90 has been contributed to the Endowment Fund to aid students pursuing a Lutheran church worker education. The Fund has increased in value by \$37,349.58 since its creation due to interest and stock market gains making it currently worth \$62,455.34. Because the Fund is stock market based, it can go down as well as up depending on stock market fluctuations. In the 1st quarter of 2020, the Fund lost over \$9,000 in value. This was offset in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarters by total gains of over \$15,000.

With the stipulation that no money can be disbursed until the Fund has a value of over \$50,000, no additional money has ever been disbursed from the Fund. The \$50,000 threshold was not reached until the 4th quarter of 2017. It dropped below the \$50,000 mark in the 4th quarter of 2018 and again in the 1st quarter of 2020 due to stock market losses.

When the Fund was created, Grace Lutheran Church had about 650 communicant members. Now, we are down to 249, and getting smaller every year. In the last 10 years (since 2011), only \$135.00 has been deposited into the Fund.

In order to make this money more usable and safe from stock market fluctuations, the Board of Stewardship recommends dissolving the Endowment Fund, putting the remaining balance of contributions (\$25,105.76) into the Bartz Scholarship Fund as a new line item in the Memorials Fund, and taking the financial gains (\$37,349.58) to pay down one of the two elevator loans with LCEF. With the remaining contributions to the Endowment Fund moved to the Memorials Fund, the contributors would still see their money go towards helping to educate future pastors and teachers, and the money would be more readily available when needed, and not dependent on the stock market or some minimum requirement before distribution.

Rental Houses

Grace Lutheran Church owns two houses adjacent to the north parking lot and uses them as rental property. They are managed by a third-party real estate management company. The reason for purchasing the houses was to tear them down or move them to increase the size of our parking lot. The first house on Monroe Avenue was purchased in 2001 for \$100,000, and the second house on West Lawn Avenue was purchased in 2005, also for \$100,000. Since then, the houses have been mostly occupied by tenants paying rent; although there have been periods of time when one or the other house was vacant.

Income from the two houses consists mostly of the monthly rent payments, and also water/sewer/utilities, late fees, and insufficient fund fees. The management company collects the payments and takes their 10% management fee plus the late fees and pays the water/sewer/utilities and various other repair bills. Grace Lutheran Church pays for the homeowner's insurance, property taxes, and major repairs and maintenance. Before money was borrowed from the Memorials Fund to pay off the LCEF loan, Grace was also making monthly mortgage payments.

Since owning the two houses, Grace has paid for major repairs totaling over \$31,000, property taxes totaling over \$103,000, and homeowner's insurance totaling over \$6,000. In addition, the management company has taken almost \$35,000 in management, collection, and leasing fees out of the monthly rent receipts. Plus, they have paid almost \$11,500 in maintenance and upkeep bills out of the rent receipts.

With all of the receipts and expenses taken into consideration, Grace Lutheran Church has lost about \$114,500 on the two houses over the 20 years of ownership. The houses are not getting any younger, so the cost of repairs, maintenance, and upkeep will only increase.

The two houses together are worth about \$250,000. Initial rough estimates of a new parking lot have varied between \$250,000 and \$500,000 for an additional 15–20 parking spaces. If the congregation decides to keep the houses until a future date, the cost of the parking lot will only increase. If the congregation decides to put in the parking lot, the houses will have to be torn down or moved, the basements filled in, the ground leveled, and the asphalt laid, plus any engineering, electrical, or drainage costs. The congregation will have to get another loan to complete the project and go further into debt. Depending on the final estimate, the cost of each additional parking space could be between \$12,500 and \$33,000 per space.

The Board of Stewardship recommends selling the houses and getting the church out of the real estate rental business. The net proceeds from the sale of the houses could be used to pay back the Memorials Fund and to continue paying down the two LCEF elevator loans.

John D. Adams
Stewardship Board

HARVEST OUTREACH: If you are available and would like to help out at Harvest Outreach, please contact Becky Saxena, Becky Gardner, or Connie Abrahamson. Grace Lutheran Church will be volunteering on **April 2nd and 9th** and, also, on **May 31st**. Thank You!

PORTALS OF PRAYER: Quarterly daily devotional books for April through June are available in the narthex. Help yourself!

ELEVATOR: As of March 8th, the balance on our elevator loans stands at **\$337,901.52**. Thank you for your support and generosity!

2020 OFFERING STATEMENTS AND 2021 ENVELOPES can be found in the church mail slots.

2021 FLOWER CHART is available for sign up in the narthex. The cost is **\$27.00** for two bouquets. To reserve a Sunday, please sign your name and the occasion. Please make your checks payable to "Grace Lutheran Church" and place in the secretary's box in the Communication Center. Thank you!

THE GROWING STRONG WITH GRACE group will continue with our monthly meetings on **Wednesday, April 21st, at 11:00 AM** and **Wednesday, May 19th, at 11:00 AM**. Bring your own lunch. Hope you all can make it!

THRIVENT ACTION TEAM CARD made it possible for the ladies of Holy Cross to join us to cut out 45 clothing protectors. Now they need to be sewed. – Ruth Anger

CONNECTION CORNER



All four of my grandparents, Sehls & Bernice Gerber and Sam & Mary Kammerzelt, were all members here at Grace Lutheran Church. My mother and father, Bud & Bonnie Gerber, met when my mom was in choir here at Grace. My mom was also confirmed here. My mom and dad got married here. My sister and I were both baptized here as well. I still remember coming to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School at Grace. So much of the memory work I have done here growing up I can still remember.

When I was 6 years old, we moved to Burlington for my dad's job at Wisconsin Electric, but we continued to worship here for quite some time as my grandparents all lived very close. Eventually we joined a church in Burlington—Our Savior Lutheran Church, which was also a Missouri Synod congregation. Services were conducted in the Parish House before the current church was built. My sister and I were confirmed at Our Savior.

When I finished a 2-year college program, I got a job and moved to Sturtevant. I transferred my membership to Grace once again, as it always felt like home and still does to this day.

When I met and married Walter, of course I wanted to celebrate and have it officiated at Grace. Walter and his family worshiped at Emmaus Church in Racine. We took classes from Rev. Martin. Walter transferred to Grace. Our children Katie and Anna were baptized and confirmed here, and both were married by Grace's Pastor Poppe. All our grandchildren were baptized at Grace. Liz was baptized at Children's Hospital, and then we had her baptism blessed at church. Liz was confirmed here as well.

When something happens, good or bad, the first thing I want to do is go to Grace Lutheran Church and pray. On Christmas Eve at midnight 1999, we had a minor house fire. I could hardly wait until morning; all I wanted to do was go to church and pray. Thank and praise the Lord that everyone was okay and there was only minimal damage.

The saddest time for us was during COVID, when we couldn't come to church for Easter service. This is our favorite service, and it was very hard to be away from the church family we love. We thank God that we have an electronic way to keep in touch and enjoy our worship service. We were blessed to be able to once again worship in person. Even with electronic technology, we felt disconnected.

So as you can tell, Grace is our home. Our very heart and soul belong to God and Grace Lutheran Church as well as all of our friends we have made along the way through these years. I feel blessed to be able to share this small piece of our family history with you all.

Bless our friends & fellow Christians,
Walter and Diana Bohn

Daily Lectionary Readings April -- May 2021

Thursday, April 1:	Exodus 12:1-28 Hebrews 5:1-14	Saturday, May 1:	Leviticus 19:9-18, 26-37 Luke 11:14-36
Friday, April 2:	Exodus 12:29-32, 13:1-16 Hebrews 6:1-20	Sunday, May 2:	Leviticus 20:1-16, 22-27 Luke 11:37-54
Saturday, April 3:	Exodus 13:17-14:9 Hebrews 7:1-22	Monday, May 3:	Leviticus 21:1-24 Luke 12:1-12
Sunday, April 4:	Exodus 14:10-31 Hebrews 7:23-8:13	Tuesday, May 4:	Leviticus 23:1-22 Luke 12:13-34
Monday, April 5:	Exodus 15:1-18 Hebrews 9:1-28	Wednesday, May 5:	Leviticus 23:23-44 Luke 12:35-53
Tuesday, April 6:	Exodus 15:19-16:12 Hebrews 10:1-18	Thursday, May 6:	Leviticus 24:1-23 Luke 12:54-13:17
Wednesday, April 7:	Exodus 16:13-35 Hebrews 10:19-39	Friday, May 7:	Leviticus 26:1-20 Luke 13:18-35
Thursday, April 8:	Exodus 17:1-16 Hebrews 11:1-29	Saturday, May 8:	Leviticus 26:21-33, 39-44 Luke 14:1-24
Friday, April 9:	Exodus 18:5-27 Hebrews 12:1-24	Sunday, May 9:	Numbers 3:1-16, 39-48 Luke 14:25-15:10
Saturday, April 10:	Exodus 19:1-25 Hebrews 13:1-21	Monday, May 10:	Numbers 8:5-26 Luke 15:11-32
Sunday, April 11:	Exodus 20:1-24 Luke 4:1-15	Tuesday, May 11:	Numbers 9:1-23 Luke 16:1-18
Monday, April 12:	Exodus 22:20-23:13 Luke 4:16-30	Wednesday, May 12:	Numbers 10:11-36 Luke 16:19-31
Tuesday, April 13:	Exodus 23:14-33 Luke 4:31-44	Thursday, May 13:	Numbers 11:1-23, 31-35 Luke 17:1-19
Wednesday, April 14:	Exodus 24:1-18 Luke 5:1-16	Friday, May 14:	Numbers 11:24-29, 12:1-16 Luke 17:20-37
Thursday, April 15:	Exodus 25:1-22 Luke 5:17-39	Saturday, May 15:	Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33 Luke 18:1-17
Friday, April 16:	Exodus 31:1-18 Luke 6:1-19	Sunday, May 16:	Numbers 14:1-25 Luke 18:18-34
Saturday, April 17:	Exodus 32:1-14 Luke 6:20-38	Monday, May 17:	Numbers 14:26-45 Luke 18:35-19:10
Sunday, April 18:	Exodus 32:15-35 Luke 6:39-49	Tuesday, May 18:	Numbers 16:1-22 Luke 19:11-28
Monday, April 19:	Exodus 33:1-23 Luke 7:1-17	Wednesday, May 19:	Numbers 16:23-40 Luke 19:29-48
Tuesday, April 20:	Exodus 34:1-28 Luke 7:18-35	Thursday, May 20:	Numbers 16:41-17:13 Luke 20:1-18
Wednesday, April 21:	Exodus 34:29-35:21 Luke 7:36-50	Friday, May 21:	Numbers 20:1-21 Luke 20:19-44
Thursday, April 22:	Exodus 38:21-39:8, 22-23, 27-31 Luke 8:1-21	Saturday, May 22:	Numbers 20:22-21:9 Luke 20:45-21:19
Friday, April 23:	Exodus 39:32-40:16 Luke 8:22-39	Sunday, May 23:	Numbers 21:10-35 Luke 21:20-38
Saturday, April 24:	Exodus 40:17-38 Luke 8:40-56	Monday, May 24:	Numbers 22:1-20 Luke 22:1-23
Sunday, April 25:	Leviticus 8:1-13, 30-36 Luke 9:1-17	Tuesday, May 25:	Numbers 22:21-23:3 Luke 22:24-46
Monday, April 26:	Leviticus 9:1-24 Luke 9:18-36	Wednesday, May 26:	Numbers 23:4-28 Luke 22:47-71
Tuesday, April 27:	Leviticus 10:1-20 Luke 9:37-62	Thursday, May 27:	Numbers 24:1-25 Luke 23:1-25
Wednesday, April 28:	Leviticus 16:1-24 Luke 10:1-22	Friday, May 28:	Numbers 27:12-23 Luke 23:26-56
Thursday, April 29:	Leviticus 17:1-16 Luke 10:23-42	Saturday, May 29:	Numbers 32:1-6, 16-27 Luke 24:1-27
Friday, April 30:	Leviticus 18:1-7, 20-19:8 Luke 11:1-13	Sunday, May 30:	Numbers 35:9-30 Luke 24:28-53
		Monday, May 31:	Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 John 9:1-23