

Living with Christ, Growing in Grace!



*Rooted In Christ - Growing in Love -
Branching out in Service*



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church

104 S. Colfax St.

West Point, NE 68788

402-372-2050

gracewpn@hotmail.com

www.gracewpn.org

Missionary:

Rev. Linda Johnson Swyenkulo

Ministers: Everyone!

Pastor: Rev. Priscilla Hukki

402-841-0220

pjhukki@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Teala Connealy

Trinity Church UCC/UMC

900 E. Decatur St.

P.O. Box 156

West Point, NE. 68788

402-372-2271

trinity.church.ucc.umc@gmail.com

Grace & Trinity Newsbites

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2023



FROM THE
PASTOR'S DESK

We are entering the last few weeks of the church year and beginning a new year in December. At the same time, we are

winding down the calendar year and moving from fall to winter. We are well into fall and heading towards winter. I do love fall's cooler weather and bright colors; but do not love less sunlight and clearing out the garden! How about you? What are your loves and dislikes about fall and winter?

The turning of the seasons holds within it the cycles of the church year. In late fall we celebrate Reformation and All Saints and then slowly move into Advent and then jump into Christmas. How do the seasons and cycles inform your faith life? Are there faith practices that fit the shorter days and longer nights?

Another way to look at the turning of the year is to think of what God might be calling you to let go of – just as the trees let go of their leaves. What in your life might need to 'die' in order for new growth to happen? What in your life needs a season of rest to prepare for new life? What is this season leading you into, or out of, or both? What is the darkness that holds you and what the light that guides you? What needs to lie fallow so that new growth has nourishment? What Advent dreams need speaking? How will Christmas joy be shared this year? How will you prepare your heart and home for the birth of the Savior?

Questions, questions; thanks be to God we don't need all the answers yesterday! Or even tomorrow ☺ Rather hear them all and see what speaks to you or tugs at your heart or just won't let you go. Prayerfully focus on that one and see where it leads you & know that God will be there when you get there; just as God is with you now.

Traveling mercies,

Pr. Priscilla

As promised, some resources about Israel and Palestine. These were compiled in the New England Synod which is a companion synod to The Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; so many are from the perspective of Palestinian Christians. Part of our work of loving neighbor is, I believe, the work of seeking to hear their story. I hope that some of these might help to begin to have an understanding the modern conflict in the Holy Land. When we read through the Old Testament, we can see a bit of how the old, old story has laid a foundation for today's complicated situation. However, the Old Testament is more than a 'history' of a region or of a people; it is in fact, telling the human story. It is our story, not their story. It tells the story of God's relationship, some call it love affair, with humankind and the universe. It tells of humankind who seem to desire to be God more than they are willing to accept the finiteness of being created from the dust of the earth. It tells of God's faithfulness to his covenant with the forefather of Jews, Muslims and Christians. We are all connected and on a very basic level we mostly all want the same things and have the same needs. Security, food, shelter, education, family and friends; the freedom to practice our faith and to celebrate our culture. May God's love be lived out loud in the world, so that, all might know that we are all God's beloved.

Recommended Reading – Books

Nonfiction:

Chacour, Elias, and David Hazard. *Blood Brothers: the dramatic story of a Palestinian Christian working for peace in Israel*. Expanded ed. Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2003.

Isaac, Munther. *The Other Side of the Wall : A Palestinian Christian Narrative of Lament and Hope*. Downers Grove Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020.

Raheb, Mitri. *Faith in the Face of Empire : The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2014.

Fiction:

Abulhawa, Susan. *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010. "Amal's is a story of love and loss, of childhood, marriage and parenthood, and finally the need to share her history with her daughter, to preserve the greatest love she has."

Alyan, Hala. *Salt Houses*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2018. "Salt Houses is a remarkable debut novel that challenges and humanizes an age-old conflict."

Laird, Elizabeth and Sonia Nimr. *A Little Piece of Ground*. Haymarket Books, 2006. A children's chapter book that describes life under occupation.

Recommended Viewing

[The Stones Cry Out: Voices of the Palestinian Christians](#): "The voices of Palestinian Christians have all too often been drowned out in the turmoil of events. This is their story, in their voices."

[The Present](#) – 2020 Academy Award Nominated short film telling the story of a father and daughter who set out to buy an anniversary gift.

[Palestine: Rick Steves](#) – "Travel with Rick Steves through Palestine. They harvest olives, follow pilgrims, swim in the Dead Sea, and join Palestinians for dinner, while learning about walls and illegal Israeli settlements."

[1948: Creation and Catastrophe](#) -- a documentary film that tells the story of the establishment of Israel as seen through the eyes of the people who lived it

Adult Christian Education -- it was so great to do the 90 Days Through the Bible this past summer that I've been thinking of how we might construct a slightly deeper dive into the whole Bible. Yes, the whole Bible. Here's what I'm thinking: are you ready?

Starting in mid-February we would meet for an hour or so, 2X a month for the next year or two. We would begin with Genesis and work our way through the Bible. I'm imaging there would be a 15 minute or so overview of the book or section, then we'd read and discuss key passages/people and time for questions. There would be a schedule of readings & topics; so, if you couldn't be at all the classes, you could 'drop-in' for a month or two or just for a particular book. Some classes we'd look at several books; other times we might spend a whole class (or two) on one book. Anybody interested? Let Pastor know by the end of November if you are interested; as some planning needs to be done in order to start in February.

Beautiful artwork!



Helping hands.



Waiting for customers.

Smiling faces –



...and goofy ones:)

Movie Night at Grace at 6:00 p.m.
Featuring 'Jesus Revolution'

In the 1970s, young Greg Laurie (Joel Courtney) is searching for all the right things in all the wrong places: until he meets Lonnie Frisbee (Jonathan Roumie), a charismatic hippie-street-preacher. Together with Pastor Chuck Smith (Kelsey Grammer), they open the doors of Smith's languishing church to an unexpected revival of radical and newfound love.



West Point Trick or Treat on Main Street



We got
photo
bombed
by a
poster!
➔



Wednesday, November 8 at Trinity! 5:00 supper; 5:30 class. Everybody is invited and encouraged to come together for a cross generational class on faith practices & worship leadership. Bible study, creative activities and baking bread. Don't miss out on this chance for fellowship and learning, all generations together.

9-12th graders – mark your calendars for Wednesday, November 8. We're meeting at Grace for pizza, planning and conversation. 6:30 pizza will be here and we'll so some planning starting around 7. Friends are welcome!

One thing Covid got us started on was take-out meals; and my have they been successful. The one lament I've heard about this is the lack of an opportunity to sit down and eat together. Is this our mission and ministry together? To create an opportunity for people to eat together and to share in the work of occasionally preparing a meal together?

What would you think about Trinity and Grace spearheading a monthly community supper at Trinity? Perhaps the last Sunday of each month. Everybody and anybody invited to come and eat together. Maybe a donation box placed so that people could offer some money if that made them more comfortable eating. Suppose there were a fund that meal organizers could use to purchase the ingredients for the meal; so that no one would feel they couldn't help because of financial limitations. Suppose groups or businesses in the community were invited to participate in organizing, preparing and serving a meal. Is this a mission and ministry that would extend the love of God and build up the community? Is it God's call for us? What is the Spirit telling you?

It's time to begin planning for the Living Nativity during the Christmas Festival on Main St. Exciting news this year! It's now a West Point Ministerial Association event. What a great way to work together to proclaim the central message of Christmas. Date: **December 5; 5-8 PM.** At least 7 people are needed for each 20-minute shift; all ages welcome. Plan to come 10 minutes before your shift starts to put on costumes; don't worry, they fit over winter coats! We've divided the hours –
5-6 Grace & Trinity,
6-7 St. Mary's,
7-8 St. Paul's;

however, you are welcome to sign up for whatever time works best for you. Contact Renee Schmid to sign-up.

We will also need some set up help from **3 & 5 and 4-5 people to clean-up from 8-8:30; at least 3 leaf blowers are needed.** For those shifts, contact Pr. Priscilla at Grace (402-372-2050).

At both council meetings it was agreed that moving the usual month for annual meeting – to accommodate pastor’s travel plans – made sense. Both constitutions stipulate a particular month; so each congregation will be holding a special congregational meeting to vote on amending the constitution for a one time change of the month of the annual meeting. Trinity will hold that special congregational meeting on November 11 immediately after service. The proposed date for the 2023 annual meeting is Saturday, December 2, after the Greening of the Church service.

Grace has a bit more time, so the special meeting has not been scheduled yet; however, the proposed date for the 2024 annual meeting is February 11 after the worship service.

The joint council meeting last night was a time of fruitful conversation and thoughtful discerning. The proceeds of the Harvest Auction and the Oktoberfest suppers were discussed. Here's the plan - Harvest Auction money to be split between: Compassion International for the child Trinity sponsors and expenses for animals for the Living Nativity on December 5. Oktoberfest proceeds were designated for local needs and here is the split approved for that (and all but one were suggested by Trinity members) - \$8000 divided among Veteran's Memorial Park; West Point Food Pantry; Protein and Dairy for the monthly food distribution; the Good Samaritan funds at Trinity & Grace. The remaining amount \$130 for Living Nativity expenses.

There will be some wonderful and fun opportunities to get to know each other in January! Be ready to sign up to share a meal, hosted by members of Grace and Trinity. Keep an eye out and ear open after Christmas to be part of the first wave of fun!

thrivent



Thank you for taking the November Food Shelf Challenge!

From Nov. 1 – Nov 30, collect 500 non-perishable food items or more for your local food shelf and upon

completion the organization will receive \$500 from the Thrivent Member Network - Nebraska Region.

YOU are a part of something BIG!!! A total of 50 challenges have been accepted. In addition to the 500 food items your team is committed to collecting, the Thrivent Member network will provide gifts up to the total of \$25,000 thanks to 50 different Thrivent members hosting 50 separate food drives benefitting 50 different food shelves in the Nebraska Region.

Items that are needed at the local Food Pantry:

Boxed Meals
Peanut Butter
Jelly
Cereal
Canned Fruit

Shampoo
Conditioner
Body Soap
Toothpaste

Wider church:

Here are links to the websites for Great Plains UMC

(<https://www.greatplainsumc.org/>); Living Waters Association UCC

(<https://www.livingwatersassociation.org/>) and Nebraska Synod ELCA

(<https://nebraskasynod.org/>). Check them out for what's going on in the wider church in our neck of the woods.

This sounds like a great class - offered by NE Synod ELCA:

Using "A Lay Preacher's Guide: How to Craft a Faithful Sermon" by Karoline M. Lewis, Pastor Jon Mapa will walk the occasional preacher through the book and provide the tools needed to be a good preacher. This online course will cover the basic elements of a good gospel-centered sermon, and provide conversational space and practical tips for preaching. Registration Deadline: January 2, 2024. More information & registration at <https://nebraskasynod.org/emmaus-spring-courses/>

In Our Prayers this Week:

To see an updated list
please contact the office.

Trinity News

November Birthdays & Anniversaries

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

To see an updated list
please contact the office.

Trinity – September Financial Report – General Fund	
	To see the latest report please contact the

Grace News

November Birthdays & Anniversaries

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To see an updated list
please contact the office.

Grace’s September Minutes are posted on the bulletin board outside the office. If you would like a copy of the minutes, please contact the office.

Grace Lutheran Church - Financial Report	
General Fund – September 2023	
To see the latest report please contact the office.	

Freed for Life Fundraiser and Educational Open House Event will be held on Sunday, November 5th from 3 to 5 p.m. at Sheridan Lutheran Church (6955 Old Cheney Rd.) in Lincoln. There will be Hors d'oeuvres, speakers, community partners, music and much more. Thank you for your continued support of the FEAST Program & the Followers of Christ Prison Ministry.

Again, this year, we hosted a “Drive-Thru” Lasagna Supper. We sold over 250 meal tickets. This fundraiser was quite a success. Many thanks to those who purchased tickets, to the Wednesday Night Christian Education kids and parents who helped serve and to all that helped in other ways.



Friendship Circle October 2023 Drive Through Lasagna Dinner

Pictured (left) in the kitchen, Ruth Maresh, Mary Vander Pol, and Sandy Boots preparing the beef lasagna. (below) Mary VanderPol and Mindi Linder cutting the lasagna for serving.

Several days of preparation went into putting together the pans of lasagna, making the applesauce Jello salad, and baking, cutting, and boxing the pans of chocolate bars. The Take-Out Lasagna Supper was very well received. Over 250 tickets were sold and delivered curbside in less than 2 hours. The success of the event was largely due to the efficient



organizing of the meal by Mary VanderPol. Thanks to everyone who helped in any way—working in the kitchen, baking the bars, assembling the meal, delivering the meal, and supporting the project.

Ruth Maresh and Nancy Petersen ready to dish up the lasagna (left).





Ruth Maresh and Pam Petersen at the head of the assembly line. Claire Smidt and Sandy Boots adding the roll and applesauce Jello salad. At the end of the line, Mary Thomas and Linda Lofgren filled the orders and bagged them. Not pictured: Vicki Furchert, Judy Raabe, Fern Thorman, Pastor Priscilla

Everyone got a box of dessert containing a square of frosted chocolate cake, some candy corn, and a couple pieces of caramel candy. This message was taped to the top of their dessert container. These are some of our “runners”—the ones who took the orders from the cars at the curb, brought us their tickets, and took their orders back out to the waiting cars.



In the background: Robin Schroeder and Drue, Ryder Stigge, Graidy Tusha, Max Bruning, and Gunnar Tullberg. Not pictured: The rest of the Christian Ed. Crew.

Sunday, October 22, 2023 The Blessing of the LWR Kits and Quilts and Coffee Hour Fellowship Fellowship Hour in honor of Nancy Petersen and family





who have been spearheading the assembling of these kits for many years. Nancy has asked to step down from this role. We are so appreciative of all the years she has organized these essential kits for those in need.

Poinsettias Needed at Grace Lutheran Church

We will again have a Christmas Garden of lovely Poinsettias for our Christmas Worship Services.

This year you can order and pay for your Poinsettias direct from the church office if done so by

Wednesday, December 13th.

\$19.50 each per Poinsettia for #_____ of plants.

Poinsettias given in honor of/in memory of (circle one)

From: _____

Or

If you bring in your own plant, fill out the following by Wednesday, December 13th in order to get your donation listed in the Christmas Bulletin. Do not bring your plant in before Friday, December 22th.

I would like to bring my own poinsettia plant.

Poinsettia given in honor of/or in memory of (circle one)

From: _____

Grace Ev. Lutheran Church
104 South Colfax Street
West Point, NE 68788-1811
Address Service Requested