

*Living with Christ, Growing in Grace!*

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church**

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**Ministers:** Everyone!

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

**Trinity Church UCC/UMC**

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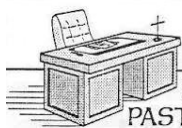
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# Grace & Trinity Newsbites

## JULY & AUGUST 2025



FROM THE  
PASTOR'S DESK

A sabbatical can take many forms. A colleague is leaving soon for a 3 month sabbatical that will take her around the world, climbing mountains, among other things. They can be as short as a month and as long as a year or more. Some are

self-funded; others employer funded; some folks get grants. I've now had two 6 week sabbaticals in my 20+ years of full time pastoral ministry. Both involved, yes, road trips! In 2013 it was from Maine to as far south as South Carolina and west to Missouri; and included a 15 day companion synod trip with the Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, as well as a silent retreat, a 3 day liturgy planning workshop, and time with family. This year, it was a bit longer road trip – a bit over 10,000 miles! It included much beauty gazing and awe, time at a Lutheran retreat center and several classes while there, and a quick visit with some family. It was partially funded by a grant from Grace's endowment committee; the rest self-funded.

What I discovered along the way that for the first time ever I wasn't on a road trip to see someone who knew me. I wasn't going as an aunt or sister; or a pastor going to a conference. I was (just) me on the road for a long time. It was disconcerting and led me to a question for reflection the whole trip – who am I? Along the way, that question, along with my star word "Be", shaped my time. I kept reminding myself to 'enjoy the moment', to do what gave me joy, to live the moments and days and weeks on my own terms and not on what others might expect or what I thought I *ought* to do. Like hiking! I saw so many beautiful things and, in many places, would think, I *ought* to go hiking. That's what everyone does who comes here. For many reasons, sometimes gimpy knees and old plumbing being two, longer hikes, especially with hilly places, are not appealing to me. I realized that's okay. A lifelong lesson for us all, I think. It is okay to live our life on our own terms, not basing our actions and choices on other's expectations, or the ought to do because everybody does. I use the word expectations on purpose; other's expectations are not (necessarily) our responsibility; but we do have responsibilities. That Gospel command to love as I have been loved, means that while I do have agency over my own life; I am God's beloved who has a responsibility to care for my neighbor, especially those most vulnerable. Of course, some of the responsibilities we have as people in community aren't really Gospel based but are important – you know, like driving on your own side of the road. Oh, and

not blocking traffic by stopping to take photos of pretty flowers or breath taking views. That one, darn it all –so many missed photo ops.

A change of scenery is good for the soul, heart, mind and body. For this pastor time away has been *good*. I absolutely love being a pastor, your pastor. It is a great honor and privilege to be allowed into moments of great joy and great sorrow; preaching and leading worship are a deep, deep joy. Nonetheless doing none of these things for 6 weeks has been very good indeed.

I feel that this time has given me the boost necessary to be able to embrace this next part of our call together with an open heart and mind, and a bit of clarity about figuring out what God might intend for us in our time together. What has this time given you?

Here's a question I have for us – what do you think God would have us do together before we transition to the next place – me to retirement and you to discerning next steps for your next pastor?

I admit, there's a danger in talking about retirement – it can shut things down. People can disengage because they don't want to be in leadership during transition; or because they don't like good byes. Or folks can just coast along – pastors included. No fuss, no muss, just wait it out. I really don't want us to do any of those things. No matter what we long for or fear in the future, we can only really live this moment. Living in the past leads to stagnation; living waiting for the future leaves us nowhere.

God calls us to be disciples in this place, for this time. The time we have is right now. So, what shall we do together, in mission and ministry? What would you like to have happen between now and later? What shall we learn together? How shall we spend the time we have together? Here's what I hope. -That we will take seriously Jesus' command to love one another; to be good neighbors. -That we will challenge and support one another in claiming our identity as beloved children of God. -That we will laugh and have fun as we work and serve and pray and build the church God would have us be.

The prayer I prayed most often through the days on the road was some variation of these words, 'Hello beloved – mountains, lakes, rivers, bears, trees, flowers, people, places, me. All good gifts around us are given by God. How beautiful! Thanks be for all that is.'

Thank you for this sabbatical and thank you for the time we have together. It's all gift and all good and God is calling. Let's listen well. Act boldly. Love relentlessly.

Traveling mercies, Pr. Priscilla



# St. Mary's, St. Paul's, Grace & Trinity

**ARE GETTING TOGETHER FOR  
A Progressive Supper**

**SUNDAY, JULY 13**

**SPONSORED BY THE WEST POINT MINISTERIAL  
ASSOCIATION**

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**5:00 pm - Appetizers at Grace**

**5:30 pm - Salads at St. Mary's**

**6:00 pm - Main at St. Paul's**

**6:30 pm - Dessert at Trinity**

**FREE WILL OFFERING ACCEPTED FOR THE WEST POINT  
MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**Reminder – there's a sign-up to host fellowship at  
both churches. Please take a turn.**

**Watch for more news about our 25/26 Christian  
Education Program! Mark your calendars for August  
20<sup>th</sup> though. Want to join the planning/teaching  
group? Let Pastor know.**

**In Our Prayers this Month:**

To see an updated list please contact the office.

**Trinity News**

**July Birthdays & Anniversaries**

**August Birthdays & Anniversaries**

To see an updated list please contact the office.

<b>Trinity – April Financial Report – General Fund Council Minutes are posted on the bulletin board by the offices. The full financial report is available in the office.</b>	
To see the latest report please contact the office.	.

**Grace News**

**July Birthdays & Anniversaries**

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Friendship Circle met on Monday, May 12, 2025, in the Fireside Room at Grace Lutheran Church.

In attendance were Ruth Maresh, Fern Thorman, Mary Vander Pol, Vicki Furchert, Linda Lofgren and Mary Thomas.

Vicki served as host for the meeting and organized a mission work night to assemble baby care kits.

We held a brief business meeting. Vicki presented a list of names who received gifts from our WELCA benevolence funds. We were reminded that Table Grace will be at Grace on June 1. We also had a short discussion on the Progressive Dinner which is scheduled for July. Grace will be responsible for appetizers this year. More detailed information will be available at the next meeting.

Following the close of our business meeting, we proceeded to assemble baby care kits. We had enough materials for 16 complete kits. They were boxed, labeled and stored. An inventory of the remaining items was conducted. Once more items are ordered and received, we will schedule another work night.

Our next meeting is June 9. Ruth volunteered to be hostess and lesson leader.

Mary Thomas

Secretary

## Christmas in July.

Come to Worship at Grace Lutheran July 20th and learn about a ministry we all can contribute to, and bring Christmas joy into a child's life. Go to [www.samaritanapurse.org](http://www.samaritanapurse.org) for more information and ideas on items you could contribute.

Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, an international relief organization. Their mission is to provide local partners around the world with shoeboxes filled

with small toys, hygiene items, and school supplies as a means of reaching out to children in their own communities with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We ship these simple gifts outside the United States to children affected by war, poverty, natural disaster, famine, and disease; and to children living on Native American reservations in the U.S.

Shoebbox gifts go to the ends of the earth to children in some of the hardest-to-reach places—whether deep jungles, city slums, steep mountainsides, or one of 1,000 remote Pacific islands. Many of these areas are resistant to the Gospel, for cultural or religious reasons, and are home to numerous unreached people groups, some of whom have never heard the Name of Jesus Christ.

You are welcome to bring a few of your favorite Christmas treats to share at coffee hour. And just a few items for the shoebox ministry you could bring July 20th would be: school supplies (that fit in a shoebox), simple children's crafts, hats, gloves, scarves, fashion accessories, quality toys, stuffed animals (small). We have plenty of shoeboxes at church...we just need lots of fun items to fill them.

We will gather items until the middle of September when we assemble the shoeboxes for delivery.

The Grace Quilters would greatly appreciate any donations of blankets, sheets and fabric.

Reminder, Vicki Furchert is still collecting Best Choice UPC codes. Our American Legion Auxiliary gets 3 cents per code. The funds are used for Veteran's projects. There is a collection bucket in Parish Hall at Grace.



Don't forget to mark your calendars for movie night – last Tuesday of the month.

## Synod Assembly Summary

The Nebraska Synod, ELCA gathered for its annual assembly May 30-June 1, 2025, in Kearney. The assembly worshiped, prayed, conducted business, and imagined together. The theme of “Imagine! Imagine? Imagine...” guided the flow of the assembly, inspired by Ephesians 3:20.



With the spirit and movement of jazz music under the direction of Dr. Jon Ailabouni, the assembly began and ended with rhythm, joy, praise and improvisation. Young adult lay leader, Kate Reynolds, from Family of Christ Lutheran in Kearney preached for opening worship, and Bishop Scott Johnson preached for closing worship, connecting the dots of how as the Nebraska Synod we are one church, better together.

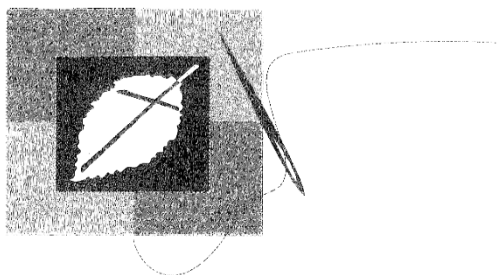
The assembly gathered with the Nebraska Synod's Companion synod partners from the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania with Bishop Fredrick Shoo, and from the United Evangelical, Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay, Pastora Presidente Mariela Pereyra. Alison Richard, Program Director for Companion Engagement provided a report on behalf of the ELCA Churchwide organization and moderated a panel discussion with the bishops.

In conducting the business of the synod, the assembly reelected, Gwen Edwards, to serve a second term as Synod Council secretary. The assembly discerned and approved the 2026 Nebraska Synod Budget. It also adopted synod resolutions: “Working for Justice and Peace,” “Youth and Vulnerable Person Protection Policies and Safe Gathering Trainings,” and “The Meaning of ‘Israel’ in Scriptural Context.” Memorials to the 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly were adopted regarding congregational constitutions and “For an End to the Occupation of Palestine and Recognition of Palestinian Statehood in the United Nations.” A resolution regarding a “Bishop Election Process Option” was not adopted.

Bishop Scott Johnson presented his annual report, naming some of the Spirit's activity as signs of God doing a new thing. He invited the



assembly to imagine and wonder what God might be inviting. As one church, better together, we look forward to more upcoming Synod on the Road Again weekends, as well as to next year's assembly, May 29-31, 2026, in Kearney.



Carol Joy Holling Camp, Conference & Retreat Center

# Quilt Auction

Saturday, July 26, 2025

Plan to join us for the 37th annual Quilt Auction!

It's a day filled with good food, great fun, and hundreds of beautiful quilts! Help us provide Camperships for campers who can't afford the full cost of a week at camp.

To view the schedule and preview quilts, visit

[NLOM.org/quilt-auction](https://www.nlom.org/quilt-auction)



