



**GRACE**  
**LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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# Grace *for* Today

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## **BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES.....By Pastor Ken Gibson**

The title of my article this month is really not mine, but rather it is the title of a book I have just completed reading by Richard Higgs. This book is one that has set on my book shelf for several years, in fact, I don't remember when or where I purchased it. But for some reason it stimulated my "buy it" instinct and then recently it also stimulated my "read me" instinct. I must say I am glad I did both.

The text is simply one man's journal of his time spent while serving with a harvest crew as they took in the nation's wheat along this nation's great plains. I found the text relaxing and enjoyable for a number of reasons. The first of which is, I love the great plains. I know many are squirming a bit as they think about that area of our country west of us that is full of what some would call nothingness. But for me "nothingness" brings a sense of peace that I find difficult to find in most other environments that I have experienced. In this text, I was taken back to times when I too would enjoy the beauty of the plains and besides they used John Deere equipment in this task of bringing in the wheat. What's not to like about that?

Another reason I enjoyed the text is that it indeed did reminded me of my youth. For when I was in college I served in two internships for two different summers for FMC Corporation, which back then was a major player in Ag Chemicals. I was assigned to the plains area with the goal of finding out how much FMC products were sold by anyone and everyone who sold Ag Chemicals. I also assisted aerial applicators with finding infestations of insects above a certain level in crops which would warrant spraying, and then if possible, make sure they were spraying with FMC products. In these consecutive summers, I traveled to every town I could get to that had a grain elevator in the states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and sections of Wyoming and Nebraska. I was on my own with a car and a decent monthly stipend and a full expense account. Much of the time I was visiting with locals and gathering not just sales tallies but also, I would gather and learn of the local folklore history. I thoroughly enjoyed those summers very much. In the book, that is pretty much what the author does every chance he gets along the journey. He takes the time to learn of the land, its history, the people, and events that have inhabited those places.

In those moments then, and still today, I can honestly say that sharing time with folks and listening to their stories and the lives they have lived is one of the greatest joys I receive in pastoral ministry. In fact, I wish we all would do such. It seems that in today's world we fail so often in being able to hear one another, especially in the flesh, one on one, face to face, person to person. Far too often these days we share our own individual thoughts, or thoughts of others in whom we agree, through electronic media. Social media posts, Instagrams, Tweets, and Snapchats are no substitute for good old fashion human contact. If we as Christian people are to be about anything, it is the business of being in relationships. Jesus was truly human and as such truly sat amongst his disciples and shared in the lives they were living along the way. How about us? When was the last time you sat and listened to someone's story? When was the last time you shared a meal with friends? When was the last time you took some time to simply enjoy the beauty around you? The stillness of a cold winter night or the beauty of the blanketing snow that embraces our soil this time of year?

What I hope we all realize is that weekly worship is for us; "Flesh time." We come together as persons on journeys, each of us full of life living now and histories of the past, each of us connected to the history of the saints who have come before us here. We are the story of the mission of Grace and we are the carriers of the story of Jesus Christ for each other, for our community, and for the world. May we be about the responsibility of listening to and respecting each other's stories in the life we share.

**SENIOR LUNCHEON- March 26** – “Oh, Glory”, a collection of patriotic quilts and projects will be presented by Kathy Flowers, designer, quilter, and author. Our super healthy menu: Almond Crusted Tilapia, Hassel-back Potatoes, Vegetable Cheese Casserole, Freshly Baked French Bread, Hawaiian Sunset Cake. Cost is only \$5, so bring a friend! Sign up in the Activity Binder by March 24 Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063



**PRAYERS**—Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to [dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org).

**World:** Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, churchwide staff & their families, Bishop Jeff Clements, synod staff & their families, those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military.

**Woodstock:** Pastor Ken Gibson & his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom & her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

**Health Concerns:** Rev. Jim Berg (friend of Marlene Botts), Shirley Berna, Lois Bloese, John Bloese, Angela Boe (friend of Hanlin Family), Mary Sue Boerner (friend of Paul Lockwood & Diane Baker-Lockwood), Sheila Boggess (friend of Kathy Stone), Frank Bunch, Myron Callihan (brother of Susan Payton), Allison Clark (niece of Martha & Bill Fleck), Dot Clark (mother of Martha Fleck), Jim Davis, Nancy Davis, Patrice Dunn, Zebadiah Fenneman, Bruce Freier (father of Pastor Amanda Bergstrom), Ken Girard (father of Tracy Wickersheim), Robert Giron (brother of Patty Kozlow), Tom Goggin, Becca Guenther (niece of Gretchen & Claude Hutchens), Tamasa Gutierrez (mother of Patty Kozlow), Sue Hanson-Smith (friend of Barb Aavang), Liz Henniges (wife of Al Henniges), Todd Hovey (brother of Tammy Resek-Goggin), Baby Jaxson L. (friend of the Wedoff family), Nancy Knieja (friend of Martha Fleck), Elayna Kuipers (friend of the Wedoff Family), Anna Larsen (sister of Al Henniges), Cynthia Lockwood (sister in law of Paul Lockwood), John Mahoney, Wilma Malinasky (mother of Janice Laird), Amanda McNally (grandniece of Diane Baker-Lockwood), Renee Merklin (friend of Rachel Bratanick), Karen Millman, Tammy Millman (daughter of Karen Millman), Kem Moran (friend of Barb Aavang), Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, Arne Olson, Andrea Paetsch (aunt of Debbi Lynd), Linda Page (friend of Joe Evanoff), Richard Petersdorf (brother of Gladys Renner), Vicki Pilgard, Carol Rank, Shawn Rank (son of Carol Rank), Sheila Readell, Herb & Bev Renner (brother & sister in law of Ken & Gladys Renner), Jessie & Sue Robertson (friends of Ron, Mary & Kimberly Koehn), Larry Rowe, Nicholas Ruffino (brother of Nathan Ruffino), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Vern Sarbaugh, Colton Sciluffo (infant son of a friend of Joy Oberman), Bill Seger, Eleanor Setser, Orion Stine (friend's grandson of Kathy Stone), Elsie Stoddard, Ginny Stroh (mother of Fay Wilson), Doris Sunday, Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahan), Ellie Mae Thompson (great niece of Gladys & Ken Renner), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Bev Visconti, Odin Werres (grand nephew of Judy Rooney), Bud Winter, Ruth Zirves

If you wish to add a prayer request for the newsletter, please call the church office at 815-338-0554. Your prayer concern will run for one week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to [Gracewoodstock.org](mailto:Gracewoodstock.org). Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church office.

## LENT- DISCIPLINES, PRACTICES.....by Pastor Amanda

As we near the beginning of the season of Lent, I invite you to consider incorporating a new discipline or faith practice during this season (from Ash Wednesday, March 6 till Easter, April 21). As you consider possible disciplines or practices, I'd also invite you hold each possible practice alongside a question of how this discipline or practice relates to your faith. For example, if you have always given up a food item for Lent and primarily spent the season counting down the days till you can eat that thing again; would you consider trying a different practice this year that might instead create space for prayer or conversation with God?

One helpful invitation I received was to consider the possibility that a Lenten practice need not always be eliminating something (meat, chocolate, swearing, Alleluias, etc.), but that another option could be adding something meaningful (writing a random note of kindness each day, dedicating time to make intentional phone calls to a friend or neighbor, or carving out five minutes to read the Bible).

Here are a few more possibilities for consideration:

- read through the psalms or another book of the Bible, selecting a short passage each day
- practice centering prayer, where you gently repeat a guiding word and let other thoughts go
- walk and pray, incorporate a new daily walk for prayerful conversation with God
- take pictures of daily God sightings and visually reflect on where you have seen God each day
- try a new way to give in this season- donating items, time, or money in a new way
- read the daily scripture that is printed in Day One each week

Whether you remove or add something from your daily routine, I pray that this season may be for you a renewing time of reflection, prayer, and faithfulness. Blessings on the journey, may this season call us into the wonders and promise of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.



**DIXIELAND WEEKEND IS ALMOST HERE!** Our Annual celebration of Jesus' Transfiguration which closes the church's emphasis on the birth of Christ and moves us into Lent, paralleling Mardi Gras is joyfully celebrated with Dixieland instrumentalists, all of the choirs, and our singing of hymns in New Orleans' Jazz style. Celebrate with us for this once a year worship expression on **March 2nd and 3rd** at all three services.

**CHILI FEST- March 3 at Noon!** You are invited to Chili Fest following the Transfiguration Dixieland Jazz worship services on March 3. Please sign up on the Activity Board and note if you'll be bringing chili or cornbread. We will share in a friendly chili fest competition, share a good meal & fellowship, and there will be raffle baskets to raise funds for the High School Youth Group's summer trips. We hope to see you there!



**FIRST COMMUNION-** It is time again for First Communion Classes. The sign up for class is due **March 24th**. Students aged 1st grade or older are welcome to join. The class itself is **April 13th** from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00P.M. The Rite of Communion will be on Palm Sunday, **April 14th** at the 8:30 service.

**GRACE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE-** Refresh and Refill- **May 5, 2019-** Women's Conference. Please join us to refresh and refill your soul as we will be inspired by a speaker who will help us have meaningful conversations to grow with our love for Christ, family and friends. Please invite your family, friends, and sisters in Christ to join us on May 5th at 2 pm. Light refreshments will be served and the cost will be \$5 per person. "God is within her she will not fall" Psalm 46.5

**MONTHLY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**-The deadline for the April newsletter is **March 15**. Send articles to Tammy Baier at [tbaier@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:tbaier@gracewoodstock.org), or the church office. Questions: Call the office at 815-338-0554.

**PASTORAL STAFFING-** At the request of the Executive Committee of the church council there is a change in days off for our Pastoral staff. In the past, both pastors were off on Fridays. The request is to stagger those days so that a Pastor is on duty, in the office or available, every work day Monday through Friday. With this in mind, Pastor Ken will now be taking Monday as his day off. Please note this change as we go forward and allow both our pastors their respective days off.

**ADULT FELLOWSHIP EVENT- Sunday, April 7** “Nunsense” at the Woodstock Opera House, 2:00 P.M. performance. We have seats reserved on the main floor, second thru fourth row. Cost: \$23. Afterwards, you may join us for supper on your own at The Pub. Please sign up in the Activity Binder and pay by March 10.



**TRANSPORTATION-** We have a member, local in Woodstock, that is looking for a ride to and from church for the 8:30 a.m. service. If you are able to help, please contact the church office at 815-338-0554.

**LENT ADULT FORUM-** Lent Adult Forum. Please join Judy Rooney for a Lenten Adult Forum on **April 7** at 9:40 in Luther Hall. We will explore the Passion and Compassion of Christ and how that relates to our own human journey of suffering and transformation.

**LENTEN SOUP LUNCHESES-** Lent begins **March 6** and we still need someone to make a large pot of soup to serve after the noon service. You can be reimbursed for your expenses, pick up an Information sheet in the Activity Binder at the Welcome Center and sign up, Many dates still available.

**SOUP MINISTRY-** This ministry will begin **March 6**. We often have leftover soup from the Lenten midweek services. This year we will be packaging the soup into containers and freezing them. The congregation is invited to take a container to someone who has been ill or is a shut-in. Some soup will be In the Parlor Refrigerator, more in the kitchen freezer. Please help yourself and spread the love.

**CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCING EVENT-** Congregational Resourcing Event. All Northern Illinois Synod congregation members are encouraged to attend this excellent annual event featuring workshops on topics including Communication/Technology, Congregation Leadership, Evangelism/Outreach/Hospitality, Faith Formation & Growth, Global Ministry, Social Justice, Spirituality/Prayer/Health & Wellness, Stewardship, Worship, and Youth/Family/Children. CRE will be held at Kishwaukee Community College in Malta, IL on Saturday, **March 9**, 9:15 a.m.- 3:15 p.m. Please register at [nisynod.org/cre](http://nisynod.org/cre) and sign up on the Activity Board to carpool to and from Grace.

**HIDDEN WITH CHRIST-** On Wednesday evenings in Lent (**March 13, 20, 27 and April 3 & 10**) we gather for a half hour worship service at 12 P.M. (followed by a soup lunch), and in the evening (after PrimeTime dinner & programs) we worship at 7 P.M. This year, our midweek worship services are based on readings from Colossians, and the service is a Lenten vesper service with Holy Communion, Hidden with Christ: Word, Song, and Silence for the Turning. Please join us during these lengthening of days as winter turns to spring, and as we wonder together about the mystery of faith and our mystical connection to Jesus Christ.

**FALL 2019 PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION-** Registration for the upcoming fall semester is currently open to all preschool families and Grace Lutheran Church members. We have a place for all God's children, ages 2-5 years old, in this loving Christian school where we learn, play, grow, and share Jesus' love. Help us spread the word with other families with young children. Registration forms can be found on our website and at the Welcome Center.

## Preschool Registration



**LENT-** On Ash Wednesday, **March 6**, we enter the season of Lent with an invitation to the discipline of Lent, self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love. We hope this season will be a meaningful time for reflection and prayer for you and invite you to additional worship opportunities. On Ash Wednesday, **March 6 at Noon & 7 P.M.**, we gather for worship with the imposition of ashes and Holy Communion. Then, for the following five Wednesdays, we gather for Lenten Midweek Worship services. In mid-April, we enter the Three Days (Maundy Thursday on April 18, Good Friday on April 19, and the Easter Vigil Saturday evening on April 20) as we prepare for the joy of the Easter celebration. We hope to see you in worship.

**PRESCHOOL FUNDRAISER- PARENTS' NIGHT OUT-** Do you need a night out from the kids? The Preschool is hosting a fundraiser that will give you some time off and your children will have a blast. The Preschool Teachers and Committee are hosting a Drive in Movie Night. On **March 15**, from 4:30 p.m.– 8:00 p.m. Children ages 3 to 8 are invited for a fun evening with dinner, crafts, and a movie. The cost is \$30.00 for the first child and \$10.00 for each additional child in the family. Complete the registration form at the welcome desk by March 10.

**SOUPER BOWL THANKS-** Your generous offerings for the Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl weekend created a \$672.47 gift to ELCA World Hunger. Thank you!

**PRESCHOOL NEWS-** Effective immediately, applicants are being accepted to fill the Director Position. Please contact the church office or preschool office for the job description and qualifications. Information is also posted on indeed.com When applying please submit a resume, transcripts and any additional qualifications.

**LENTEN BOOK STUDY-** Beginning on February 24, we will have a book study of A Lens of Love: by Jonathan Walton. The book was written to provide a better understanding about “the world in which the Bible was produced and the major issues the Bible sought to address in the ancient world.” There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Also, the possibility exists of providing a repeat session on Monday evenings if there is interest. The class will meet in Luther Hall during the educational hour and will run for approximately eight weeks with a couple of Sundays off due to calendar conflicts. Hope to see you there.

**CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY SURVEY-** As the Church Council prepares to review our strategic plan, we will be asking congregational members to complete a Congregational Vitality Survey prepared by the Northern Illinois Synod and the ELCA. Some might wonder, “Why should we do this?” That is a good question; and the answer is because this is the one tool we have that helps us measure subjective realities about our relationship with God, our relationship with one another in the congregation, and our relationship with the world beyond the congregation. The survey availability will be through **March 1** in the church office during office hours, and before or after worship on **March 2 and 3**.



**WACM FUNDRAISER-** Due to scheduling conflicts, The King and I fundraiser has been postponed until August. Ticket refunds can be received from the office.

**WELCA RETREAT-** Northern Illinois Synod Women of the ELCA will be hosting a retreat “God for all Seasons”. This retreat will be Saturday, **April 27, 2019** at Lutheran Outdoor Ministries in Oregon, IL. There will be Bible Study led by Esther Prabhakar, Special Music Presentation by Peg Lehman, and Worship led by Pastor Jessica Bakken. For registration and more information please go to [nisynod.org/women](http://nisynod.org/women).

**PRIMETIME MEAL TEAMS NEEDED-** Please consider helping this ministry. It is very helpful to busy families involved in Wednesday activities to have a meal ready to enjoy by their families. Just taking one date would be a huge help. Contact Melissa McMahan for more information or meal team ideas, [mmcmahan@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:mmcmahan@gracewoodstock.org).

## SYNOD NEWS-

Walking Together is the weekly e-news of the Northern Illinois Synod. Everyone is encouraged to subscribe by using the online form at <http://nisynod.org/pubs/wt/> or by sending names and email addresses to [karin@nisynod.org](mailto:karin@nisynod.org).

## CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS -

When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center website](#) or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.

## SAVE THE DATE-

Transfiguration Weekend MAR 2/3  
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study-MAR 5  
Sewing Circle/ All Committee- MAR 5  
Ash Wednesday Services- MAR 6  
Lenten Soup Lunch- MAR 6  
DAP- MAR 7  
Preschool Book Fair- MAR 9/10  
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study- MAR 12  
Midweek Lent Services- MAR 13  
Lenten Soup Lunch- MAR 13  
Preschool Movie Fundraiser- MAR 15  
Youth Group FMSC- MAR 15  
Faith Circle- MAR 18  
Men's Bible Study/Sewing O-MAR 19  
NE Conference Meeting- MAR 19  
Midweek Lent Services- MAR 20  
Lenten Soup Lunch- MAR 20  
DAP/Council- MAR 21  
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study-APR 2  
Sewing Circle/ All Committee- APR 2  
Midweek Lent Services- APR 3  
Lenten Soup Lunch- APR 3  
DAP- APR 4  
Lent Adult Forum- APR 7  
Men's/Afternoon Bible Study- APR 9  
Midweek Lent Services- APR 10  
Lenten Soup Lunch- APR 10

Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all that is happening at Grace!

[gracewoodstock.org](http://gracewoodstock.org)

## GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL

**Senior Pastor**/Rev. Kenneth D. Gibson

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### Parish Musicians

Terry Aavang, Jan Burns, Dale Carlson,

Tammy Baier, Carrie Filetti

**Interim Director of Preschool Ministry**

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### Preschool Staff

Tammy Baier, Barbara Buczek,

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### Officers & Council

Andy Bellavia, Cathy Buhrow, Mike Freeman,

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Hutchens, Kevin Kleinjan, Mike Liedtke, Matt

Meiners, Hannah Paulson, Jessica Potoczky

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Office Hours: 8:30 am-3:30 pm, M-Th

8:30 am-12:00 pm, F