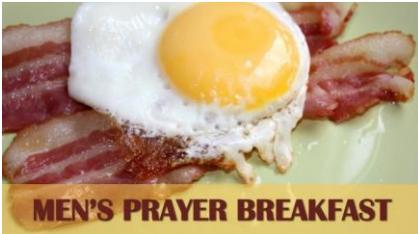


# GraceNotes



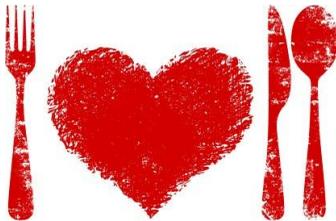
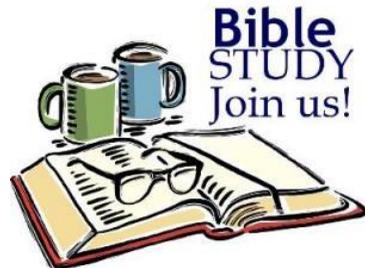
A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC  
Volume 220, Number 2 February 2017

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February 17<sup>th</sup>  
9:00 AM  
@ the Blue Moon, Newton

"Connections"  
Every Thursday Morning  
10:30 AM



Valentine Dinner - Mexican Taco Bar  
February 12<sup>th</sup> 5:00 PM  
Everyone Invited

Pancake Supper  
February 28<sup>th</sup>  
6:00 PM



**SHROVE TUESDAY**

## From the Pastor's Pen...



Dear Grace Family,

Peace, mercy and grace be yours from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Christ.  
Amen!

What a month January was! The Board Retreat was the most uplifting experience! On behalf of the Board members, I want to thank you, the people of Grace, for your support in making the retreat possible. It was monies and time well spent! Nine individuals came together, most not knowing what to expect, but through prayer and worship, there was wonderful sharing and involvement by each and every member. There was a time of goal setting, a time of sharing and openness, a time of fellowship and bonding as a Board. In the evaluations, the comment made most was that we were all clear on the expectations and the priorities and there is much work that needs to be done. But thanks be to God for the presence of His Holy Spirit that touched us all as we worshiped and prayed together!!

There was a wonderful presentation on the Grace Cemetery by Allen Biggerstaff and Reid Lynch as they shared the deep and meaningful history of the cemetery. There is much responsibility that goes with the management of the cemetery and we will be intentional as we address those needs in 2017.

The staff at the Catholic Conference Center were perfect hosts and the food was extraordinary! There was also a group of 64 women from Cold Springs UMC in Kannapolis in retreat there at CCC and our meal times were filled with beautiful singing and great fellowship.

It is my prayer that each disciple at Grace will become involved with the different Ministry Teams. The Board also approved the beginnings of a new Shepherding Ministry as each Board member will disciple 10-12 households in the congregation. This is for the purpose of communication, as well as caring for one another. So you will be getting a call soon from your Board Member/Shepherd, just to say "Hi" and introduce themselves to you. I know you will welcome that call and will be enthusiastic as you share with your assigned Shepherd. I hope to see you soon or in worship. Until then, be grace-filled with His Holy Spirit.

Blessings!  
Pastor Gil Gilbert

## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR FEBRUARY

- ❖ Communion Assistants - Michael & Wanda Hall
- ❖ Ushers - Allen Biggerstaff, James Hall, Joe Whisnant, Ted Whisnant
- ❖ Greeter - Debi Pisko
- ❖ Altar Preparation - Debra Hefner, Betty Wilfong
- ❖ Children's Church and Nursery - Emilee Bumgardner, Sheila Drum
- ❖ Offering Tabulators - Mike Pisko, Herb Travis

*Please be mindful of your commitment to serve. If you are unable to fulfill that commitment, be reminded that it is your responsibility to find someone to serve in your place.*

## FLOWER CHART FOR FEBRUARY



2/05 - OPEN

2/19 - Bobbie Wright

2/12 - OPEN

2/26 - OPEN

If you wish to give the flowers for a given Sunday, please list your name on the chart in the narthex. *You are responsible for ordering the flowers from a florist of your choice; we do not have a standing order with any florist.* The liturgical color of the day is listed to assist you in selecting flowers appropriate for that Sunday. You should contact the Church Office so that the correct information is placed in the bulleting for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office the Thursday prior to your selected Sunday. You can call the Church Office between 9 AM and Noon each weekday, leave a note on the desk, or send an email to let us know the occasion or memoriam for this wonderful gift of beatification of the worship.

## ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR DECEMBER 2016/JANUARY 2017

	12/24/16	12/25/16	1/01/17	1/08/17	1/15/17	1/22/17
SCS	0	17	35	0	37	34
Worship	106	86	70	0	80	75
General Offering	285.00	3,032.00	4,875.00	SNOW	3,406.00	1,562.00
Learning Hour	0.00	11.00	41.57	0.00	20.00	27.00
Building Fund	0.00	0.00	243.00	0.00	2,608.00	90.00
Christmas Offering Envelope	0.00	647.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Memorial Fund - David Warlick	0.00	20.00	0.00	0.00	40.00	0.00
Local Outreach	0.00	0.00	165.00	0.00	120.00	0.00
National Outreach	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	0.00
Fellowship Hall Usage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00
First Sunday Lunch	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	70.00	0.00
Land Rental	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	0.00

**THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS** will meet at Noon on Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, at Wesley Chapel.

**FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH** will be held February 5<sup>th</sup> following Worship. The meal of soup, salad, sandwiches and dessert will be furnished by the Praise and Worship Ministry Team. Suggested freewill offering - \$3.00.

**MEN OF GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 AM at the Blue Moon. We invite all men of Grace to join us for discussion, prayer, and great food.

**SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST** will be held Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 AM. Providing the breakfast are Harvey and Helen Leatherman and Family, and Dan and Tricia Panek. Suggested freewill offering - \$3.00.

**THE GRACE SENIOR/ADULT LUNCHEON GROUP** will meet in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, from noon until 2:00 PM. Baked salmon, salad, corn, rolls, red velvet cake and drinks will be served. Bingo will follow the lunch. Please invite a friend and come join the fun and fellowship!

**FAYE LANE** would like to thank Grace Church for the lovely poinsettia.

**THE 2017 FLOWER CHART** is now posted in the Narthex. Please sign up if you wish to sponsor the flowers for any given Sunday. It is your responsibility to contact a florist of your choice to order flowers or use flowers from your garden or other source to make an arrangement. Please notify the Church Office regarding your dedication no later than noon on the Thursday prior to your sponsorship.

**"CONNECTIONS" BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES** Thursday mornings at 10:30 AM. This study focuses on upcoming lessons for Sunday's worship as well as ideas and interpretations concerning scripture. For us to offer this type of Bible study digging into God's Word seems to be the best way to begin the new year! Come and bring a friend!

**ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING** for the Property/Facilities Ministry Team will be held Monday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM. If you have any interest in serving on this Ministry Team, please plan to attend the meeting or talk with Carl Beam. According to the Bylaws of the Constitution, the Property/Facilities Ministry Team shall, subject to the control of the Board:

- a. see that the property of the congregation is maintained in good repair.
- b. supervise the routine maintenance and cleaning of the buildings and grounds.
- c. review the insurance needs annually with the Finance/Stewardship Ministry Team and make recommendations to the Board.
- d. make an annual inspection of all the property in the month of April and report any repairs or improvements needed at the May meeting of the Board.
- e. formulate short and long range property maintenance and building needs.
- f. review the annual maintenance and repair needs of the congregation and suggest to the Finance/Stewardship Ministry Team an annual spending plan for the use of the Property/Facilities Ministry Team. (CB)

**VALENTINE DINNER** will be held Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, at 5:00 PM sponsored by the Christian Education/Learning Ministry Team. The menu will be a Mexican Taco Bar. Come and enjoy. Games will be the entertainment. If anyone needs a ride please let Nancy Leonard know. Someone will be glad to pick you up. Also let Nancy know if you have any dietary needs. Everyone is welcome to attend. (NL)

**NORTH CAROLINA LUTHERANS FOR LIFE** will hold their next meeting on Sunday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 PM at Saint John's Lutheran Church, 2126 Saint Johns Church Road, Conover. The focus of Lutherans For Life is two-fold. First, they desire to say very clearly that death is not an acceptable, God-pleasing way to deal with the problems of life. Second, they desire to say very clearly that there is a better way. They ground both of these in the truth of God's holy Word. His Word defines what is not acceptable. His Word points to a better way, He who is *The Way*, Jesus Christ. They deal with issues of abortion, adoption, bioethics, creation, end-of-life, family living, post-abortion healing, fetal development, and sexual purity. For more information contact Pastor Scott Johnson at 828-464-4071. (KH)

**SHROVE TUESDAY** is February 28<sup>th</sup> this year. Jodi Martin, Jill Matthews and Jackie Jarrett are organizing this event again this year. Anyone that can assist, please feel free to contact them. This pancake supper will be served at 6:00 PM. Everyone is encouraged to join in this time of fellowship before our Lenten Journey begins.

Shrove Tuesday gets its name from the ritual of shriving, when the faithful confessed their sins to the local priest and received forgiveness before the Lenten season began. As far back as 1000 AD, "to shrive" meant to hear confessions.

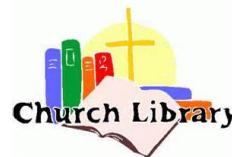
Shrove Tuesday also marked the beginning of the 40-day Lenten fasting period when the faithful were forbidden to consume meat, butter, eggs or milk. However, if a family had a store of these foods they would certainly spoil by the time the fast ended on Easter Sunday. What to do? Use up the milk, butter and eggs no later than Shrove Tuesday. And so, with the addition of a little flour, the solution quickly presented itself in... pancakes.

Today, the Shrove Tuesday pancake tradition lives on in Western Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. It is most associated with the UK, where it is simply known as Pancake Day with a traditional recipe that looks to all the world more like a French crepe rather than the 'mile-high' stack so popular on National Pancake Day in America. (JH)

## **New Items for February**



## **IT OUT!!!!**



### **BOOKS FOR YOUTH**

1. Truth Seekers. Choices by Bill Myers
2. For Such A Time As This by Angie Smith  
Stories of Women from the Bible retold for girls
3. The Prince Warriors Book 1 by Priscilla Shirer
4. The Prince Warriors Book 2 Unseen Invasion by P. Shirer
5. Brave Girls Bible Stories Celebrating Great Girls of the Bible by J. Gerelds

### **BOOKS FOR ADULTS**

1. Daughter of the Reformation by M. Jackson  
A historical perspective of the life and times of the wife of Martin Luther  
donated by Marjorie McDaniel
2. The Living Room by R. Whitlow  
A great fiction book by a best-selling author

**OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2017** are available in the Narthex. Please help distribute these to your family and friends. If there are no envelopes with your name on, and you desire a set, please contact the Church Office. We also have special children's envelopes to help you begin to teach your unconfirmed child/grandchild good stewardship in the church. (KH)

**"FACING DARKNESS"**, a Samaritan's Purse Film will be playing at the Carmike 14 Theater in Hickory. On Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, you will have the opportunity to see Samaritan's Purse in action in the compelling new documentary, "Facing Darkness". Playing in select theaters *for only one night*, the movie takes you into the fight against the Ebola pandemic in West Africa. This powerful film features Dr. Kent Brantly, Franklin Graham, Nancy Writebol, and other Samaritan's Purse team members, who - with faith, determination, and prayer - witnessed God perform miracles! Group tickets can be purchased shortly for a discounted price. (KH)

**THANKS TO** David and Belinda Wilfong for placing our manger scene back in storage. Others that helped with the removal of Christmas items were Don and Nicky Jarrett, Doug and Jackie Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Mike Pisko, and Malinda Wilfong. We also thank Don and Nicky Jarrett for removing the poinsettia sprigs from the church cemetery. Juanita Haas donated numerous Christmas greenery and decorations for use during Christmas 2017. Thanks again to Tricia Panek for the Christmas banners. (JH)

**CHURCHES AND MEMBERS ARE TOO BUSY.** We have created cultures of activity in many of our congregations instead of cultures of discipleship. There are so many important facets of church life to emphasize. Where should we put our greatest emphases?

Without diminishing other ministries and activities in the local congregation, let's examine the two most common practices in healthy churches. After looking at tens of thousands of churches over the past several years, we would be negligent if we did not note these two common practices in the healthiest of the churches. These practices showed up again and again.

- **The church strongly encourages its members to read the Bible daily.** There has been excellent research toward this reality. When Christians read their Bibles every day, they are more likely to evangelize, minister to the community, pray, give to the church, and be a unifying force in the congregation. Healthy churches do not simply say members *should* read their Bibles, they are highly intentional and strategic about helping the members toward that end. It is not a one-and-done emphasis. It is a part of the DNA of the church, and the emphasis and encouragement is redundant and persistent.
- **The church has an incredibly strong emphasis on groups.** Choose the name that best fits your context: community groups, Sunday school, life groups, small groups, home groups, or others. Drop out rates are five times higher for those in worship only - versus those who also are involved in a group. Groups provide three incredible dynamics for members: they increase stickiness or assimilation; they provide community; and they are instruments of accountability.

At the risk of being redundant, let's be very clear. It is not the mere existence of groups or emphases on Bible daily reading that are the differentiating factors in healthy churches. Rather, it is the reality that church leaders are strategic about these two vital areas and determined to move all members to these two important habits. Would your congregation say these two areas are key emphases in your church? Are you reading your Bible every day? Are you involved in groups activity other than worship? If you answer "yes" to both questions, and this is true for a majority of the members of your congregation, then you are on the way to being a healthy church.

## **NOTES OF THANKS**

- From *Habitat for Humanity of Catawba Valley*. With your gift you are making a difference in the lives of families. We are grateful for your support.
- From *Eastern Catawba Cooperative Christian Ministry*: Thank you for your donation of 199 pounds of food to the ECCCM Charlie Bunn Food Pantry. With the recent expansion of our Student Hunger Prevention Program (SHPP) to all Newton-Conover City Schools and Catawba County Schools, the need for our food is at an all-time high. The SHPP is a yearlong program that provides families with vulnerable school-aged (K-12) children with nutritious food for an entire year, ensuring young minds receive the nutrition they need to be successful. The morning of the expansion we received 40 applications, demonstrating the great need in Catawba County. Through your generosity we can meet this need. Thank you for partnering with us as we work to ensure no child in Catawba County goes hungry!
- From *The Salvation Army*. Because of you, broken lives are restored. People who are facing hunger, homelessness, or abuse receive compassionate help here. For almost 150 years, The Salvation Army has been coming to the rescue of people who are overwhelmed by life. It started in the backstreets of London, when Willima Booth began sharing God's love with needy souls. Thanks to kind and compassionate friends like you - people with a heart for their struggling, suffering neighbors - that tradition continues just as strongly today in our community. Thank you for sharing so generously from your hard-earned resources with us. May God bless you for your compassion. (KH)

**FOOD DONATIONS** are still needed. The Grace family opened their hearts and purses over Thanksgiving and Christmas by providing canned goods that were donated to a local Food Pantry. There are still weeks of winter weather remaining, and there's always a need to help our local charitable organizations as they feed and clothe those families in the Catawba Valley who are experiencing difficulties providing for their families. As we are preparing for the upcoming Lenten season, we are asking you to participate again by donating more canned food items. We will carry this collection forward until Ash Wednesday which falls on March 1<sup>st</sup> this year. Fruits, vegetables, soups all most welcomed and appreciated. Thank you for your support in this local Mission. (JH)

**FEBRUARY IS CAMP MONTH.** This is a time to celebrate camp ministry and to invite the children, youth, and families to the ministry offered at your camps in North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Looking for a way for your child to grow in self-esteem, make new friends and draw closer to Jesus, while experiencing spiritual adventures in God's creation? Then our camps are for you! There are 2 DVD's, one from Summer Camp at Lutheridge and one from Summer Camp at Lutherock, available in the Grace Library or the Church Office. A catalog with the summer camps being offered is also in the Grace Library and on the bulletin board across from the Pastor's Office. (KH)



Once all villagers decided to pray for rain.  
On the day of prayer all the people gathered, but only one boy came with an umbrella.  
That's FAITH!

**CHRISTIANITY IS THE MOST PERSECUTED RELIGION** in the world, as reported in the 2017 World Watch List. The list ranks the top 50 countries where it's most dangerous to be a Christian. According to the watchdog group, which has tracked and ranked global persecution against Christians over the past 25 years, persecution has worsened for the third year in a row, with 2016 being the "worst year yet." Over 215 million Christians now live in countries where they're exposed to verbal harassment, physical violence, and even death because of their faith. North Korea, known for its secretive authoritarian government, remains the most dangerous country for Christians—for the 14th year in a row. The report also brings to light the fact that persecution fueled by ethnic nationalism, especially in Asia and the Middle East, is quickly on the rise.

"Persecution rose globally again for the third year in a row, indicating how volatile the situation has become. Countries in South and Southeast Asia rapidly rose to unprecedented levels and now rank among such violent areas as the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa." Other findings of the report include a rise of 62 percent of killings of Christians in Nigeria, and an average of 40 incidents per month of beatings and church attacks in India. The report also showed that now "Christians are being killed in more countries than before for their faith."

When we think about praying for the persecuted church, the first thing that comes to mind is to pray for safety, but Scripture says, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" —1 Peter 4:12-13, NIV. According to Peter, persecution should not surprise us, but instead should be a source of joy, not because of a desire to suffer, but because of the reason for suffering: Jesus' name. Jesus himself promised blessing to those who suffer for his name. (PG)

### **UNKNOWN VEHICLES IN CHURCH PARKING LOT**

During the past few months, it has come to the attention of the Leadership Board and Staff that vehicles have been parked or seemingly abandoned in the church parking lot without permission. Law enforcement officers are on a regular alert to stop and inspect vehicles which have been left on the premises without permission. The officers are investigating whether the vehicles are stolen or abandoned. This is due to several home and business break-ins, as well as vandalism and drug traffic in and around our area. There has been some drug activity in the Grace Cemetery and behind Union Church. We thank our law enforcement officers who patrol our church and the area on a regular basis and have apprehended several persons committing crimes.

If the Church Office is not made aware of persons who have left their cars in the church parking lot, then the law enforcement agencies have informed us that by NC Law, due to the church being private property, to have cars towed at the expense of the owner. The law officers will also be checking the licenses and ownership of these vehicles to discern if they are stolen, used in a crime, abandoned or left without permission. Law enforcement of Catawba County encourages the church pastor/leaders to be informed of the cars left in our parking lot for whatever reason. For the safety of all in our community, please do not give permission for persons, known or unknown, to use the church parking as a storage lot. Vehicles left over 48 hours without informing the Church Office/pastor/board will be towed at owner's expense.

The Board will soon be installing small signs stating the state law concerning trespassing in the parking areas, as well as in the cemetery. Thank you for your cooperation as we strive to keep our church and community safe. (PG)

## WELCOME TO NEW CAROLINAS MISSION DISTRICT CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS:

- + Nazareth Lutheran Church, Rural Hall, NC: Pr. Kevin Powers, Interim
- + Pr. Craig Abee, Interim, Lamb of God Lutheran Fellowship, Simpsonville, SC
- + Pr. David Brooks, NALC Raleigh Mission
- + Pr. Alex Chartier, Interim, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, North Augusta, SC

### A MISSION HIGHLIGHT

Christ United Lutheran Church, Granite Falls, NC

*“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?”*

Most churches talk about how they are all about mission. Christ United Lutheran Church really lives it. At Christ United mission is not just something the mission team does, it's a part of who they are. Founded from a small group of nine who felt the sanctity of the Word was being lost, they started Christ United and in the last 6 years outgrew a house, a garage, and two shared parking lots. They are now settling into a piece of land and building God prepared them for and paved the way for them to move into. As Pastor Heidi Punt shared, the process of finding their new church home was very humbling and showed God's providence every step of the way. This included a non-traditional loan and the gifts and hands-on assistance from many mission partners in the Carolinas and Illinois. They were very blessed.

From moving into a space that meets the needs of their growing congregation to partnering with missions, Pastor Punt shared that the question, "...is never about 'Where's the money?'" The people pray and do Bible Study, and eventually God reveals the way it will be accomplished. We know it will be done and we just look for what we can do." As part of this process they seek to make mission very tangible. Every month Christ United focuses on a mission partner with their head, heart, and hands. They have a speaker come and fill their heads with stories about the mission. They fill their hearts with hearing the impact of the mission and pray for the lives changed. Then they put their hands to work and do a practical service project with the mission. Their mission partnerships live out Matthew 25:42-44 and Psalm 139:14. Pastor Punt shared that Christ United acts out the belief that "Every human being is fearfully and wonderfully made by God and they have a purpose; and our purpose is to bring Christ in tangible ways: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, care for the sick and in prison."

Pastor Punt shared that their mission partnerships are about relationship. They have prayer partners, do pulpit exchanges, visit back and forth, and this year the congregation is anticipating a Bible Study exchange and possible retreat with one of their mission partners. Pastor Heidi shared, "We may not have the finances, but we have the excitement of the Holy Spirit to share. Relationship is key. If there is no relationship there is not mission outreach. There is a little bit of fear [in relationships]. When you open up your arms wide you are vulnerable, but when you are vulnerable it is a beautiful place to be with God. It is tangible." (NALC)

*A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5 and Ryan, 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'" Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"*

**LIFEDATE BOOKLETS** are available in the Narthex. This is a quarterly journal of news and commentary from Lutherans For Life. Its purpose is to equip Lutherans (and anyone that reads it) to be Gospel-motivated voices for protection of the unborn. Read and pray over the issues described in the booklet. (KH)

**ALONG WITH FINDING** new ways to encourage congregations to become more than pew-sitters, we have the fabulous opportunity to encourage them to become message boards. That's what a Choose Life license plate is – a message board promoting the message we want everyone to see. Long awaited since the Choose Life license plate was passed into law by our legislature in 2011, then immobilized by an injunction filed in court, the Fourth District Court ruled in our favor in March 2016. The plates have been manufactured and distribution to applicants began in October 2016. VICTORY! A Choose Life license plate can be ordered directly from the DMV website. <https://edmv.ncdot.gov/VehicleRegistration/SpecialPlate/Detail?PlateID=214#term=choose>. Carolina Pregnancy Care Fellowship, the statewide network and training organization for the pregnancy resource centers in the state, is designated by the State of North Carolina as the recipient of funds generated by the license plate sales. The funds are then distributed to pregnancy resource centers around the state, which includes **Pregnancy Care Center of Catawba Valley**. The cost of the Regular Choose Life plate is \$25.00 and the Personalized Choose Life plate is \$55.00. The \$25.00/\$55.00 special fee is an (ANNUAL) fee due in addition to the regular license fee.

- Janet Shores RN, Assistant Director of the Pregnancy Care Center of Catawba Valley



### **THE HISTORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY**

The history of Valentine's Day—and the story of its patron saint—is shrouded in mystery. We do know that February has long been celebrated as a month of romance, and that St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. But who was Saint Valentine, and how did he become associated with this ancient rite?

Did you know that approximately 150 million Valentine's Day cards are exchanged annually, making Valentine's Day the second most popular card-sending holiday after Christmas.

The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons, where they were often beaten and tortured. According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl—possibly his jailor's daughter—who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine," an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories all emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic and—most importantly—romantic figure. By the Middle Ages, perhaps thanks to this reputation, Valentine would become one of the most popular saints in England and France.

While some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial—which probably occurred around A.D. 270—others claim that the Christian church may have decided to place St. Valentine's feast day in the

middle of February in an effort to “Christianize” the pagan celebration of Lupercalia. Celebrated at the ides of February, or February 15, Lupercalia was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture, as well as to the Roman founders Romulus and Remus.

To begin the festival, members of the Luperci, an order of Roman priests, would gather at a sacred cave where the infants Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were believed to have been cared for by a she-wolf or lupa. The priests would sacrifice a goat, for fertility, and a dog, for purification. They would then strip the goat’s hide into strips, dip them into the sacrificial blood and take to the streets, gently slapping both women and crop fields with the goat hide. Far from being fearful, Roman women welcomed the touch of the hides because it was believed to make them more fertile in the coming year. Later in the day, according to legend, all the young women in the city would place their names in a big urn. The city’s bachelors would each choose a name and become paired for the year with his chosen woman. These matches often ended in marriage.

Lupercalia survived the initial rise of Christianity and but was outlawed—as it was deemed “un-Christian”—at the end of the 5th century, when Pope Gelasius declared February 14 St. Valentine’s Day. It was not until much later, however, that the day became definitively associated with love. During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds’ mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of Valentine’s Day should be a day for romance.

Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, though written Valentine’s didn’t begin to appear until after 1400. The oldest known valentine still in existence today was a poem written in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London following his capture at the Battle of Agincourt. (The greeting is now part of the manuscript collection of the British Library in London, England.) Several years later, it is believed that King Henry V hired a writer named John Lydgate to compose a valentine note to Catherine of Valois.

In addition to the United States, Valentine’s Day is celebrated in Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. In Great Britain, Valentine’s Day began to be popularly celebrated around the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th, it was common for friends and lovers of all social classes to exchange small tokens of affection or handwritten notes, and by 1900 printed cards began to replace written letters due to improvements in printing technology. Ready-made cards were an easy way for people to express their emotions in a time when direct expression of one’s feelings was discouraged. Cheaper postage rates also contributed to an increase in the popularity of sending Valentine’s Day greetings.

Americans probably began exchanging hand-made valentines in the early 1700s. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Howland, known as the “Mother of the Valentine,” made elaborate creations with real lace, ribbons and colorful pictures known as “scrap.” Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine’s Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine’s Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas.) Women purchase approximately 85 percent of all valentines. And that is the rest of the story! (PG)

***In ancient Greece, tossing an apple to a girl  
was a traditional proposal of marriage.  
Catching it meant she accepted.***



## MINISTRY PRIORITIES DETERMINED BY BOARD

During the Board Retreat in January, the following areas of ministry at Grace were determined to be the most important out of a list of many items that need the attention of the Board and congregation during the coming year and beyond. These are deemed the most pressing areas and are listed in no particular order:

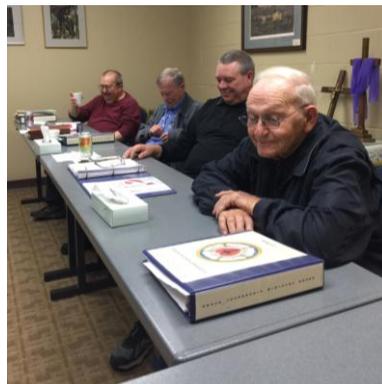
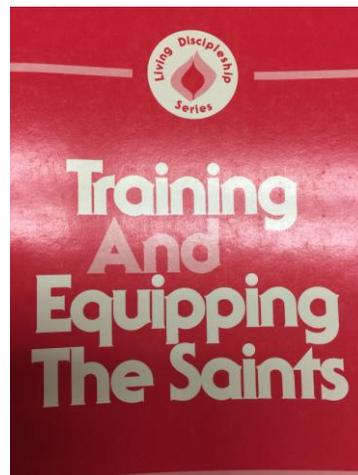
Narthex expansion  
Windows  
Update Fellowship Hall/Kitchen  
Basement/Classrooms  
Cemetery  
Youth Ministry

The Board will be calling on members of the congregation to assist in making these goals a reality in the coming year, as well as the long-term goals. If you are called upon for your input by a Board Member or Ministry Team Chair, please give your time and talents to the specific needs.

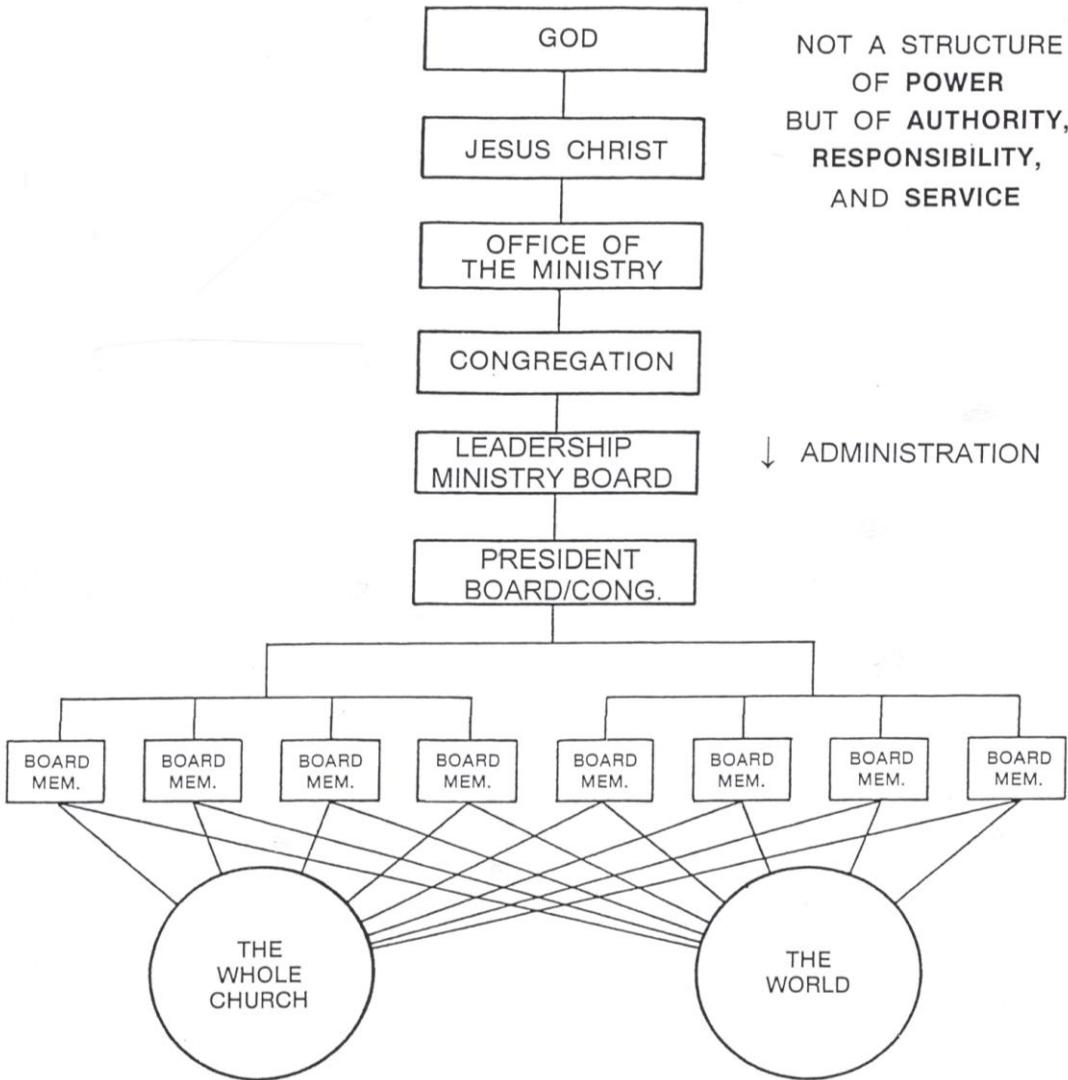
### **LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD OFFICERS**

were elected at the Board Retreat.

President - Tim Eckard  
Vice President - Herb Travis  
Secretary - Alan Shull  
Treasurer - Ricky Bivens  
Financial Secretary - Mike Pisko



# CHART OF SPIRITUAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY



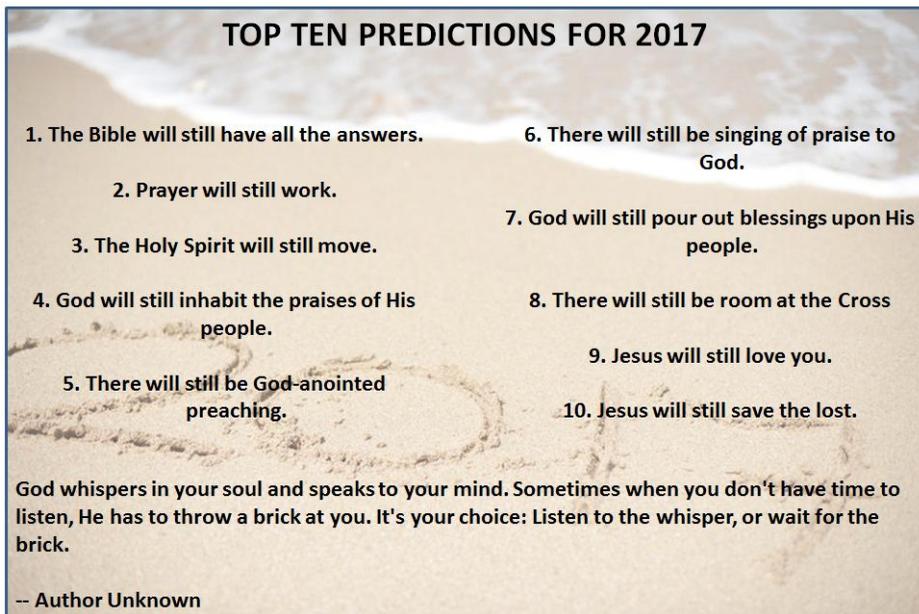
**BOARD APPROVES BOARD REPS TO MINISTRY TEAMS.** At the January Leadership Ministry Board Retreat, the Board examined and studied the job descriptions of each Ministry Team as outlined in the Constitution. The Board then took action to assign a Board member to each Ministry Team and they are as follows:

Cemetery – Herb Travis	Learning – Joe Momier
Witness – Alan Shull	Finance – Ricky Bivens
Outreach – Michael Pisko	Property – Carl Beam
Worship – Tim Eckard	Fellowship – James Hall/Johnny Moss
Youth – Under Construction(NALC)	

You are welcome to contact these leaders to address needs of the different ministry teams.

**WOW, THE LEADERSHIP BOARD** training and planning retreat came and went in a flash. As I was preparing to leave the retreat, a feeling of sadness came over me. I did not want to leave a place and time that was filled with so much love, compassion, and support. To begin with, my room was on the second floor, with no elevator in the building, I started to wonder how many times up and down the stairs it will take me to get my stuff to my room. I had just gotten out of my truck when the Board Member brothers came to help me. I only had to make one trip, and they probably would have carried me up the steps if needed. Sure I wanted to get home and see my family, but not eager to get back into a daily routine of shootings, murder, rapes, robberies, and kidnappings. In room TV's were replaced with a cross. We went to chapel services five times during this short weekend, and even had communion. I wish you could have heard us sing hymns without music, and see a group of grown men holding hands in prayer. In the meetings we learned what our roles as leaders should be and need to be, especially for our church, but also in the community, and in our own lives. During this time new kinships were made, goals were set, plans were laid out, dedications were made, and a renewed faith in Christ was found. Thank you, my family at Grace, for giving me such a week-end.

- Ricky Bivens



**FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH AND SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST**

Those listed below are ones that served those months the past year. Please look at the list below and contact the Church Office by email, a phone call, or a note on the desk to verify that you will prepare the meals, or sign the list on the bulletin board across from the Pastor's Office. If you will **NOT** be serving again, we need to know that as well so another group can be recruited. It has been requested that the menu for each meal be listed in the newsletter and bulletin. They are due in the office by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month prior to the event. (KH)

	<b>FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH</b>	<b>SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST</b>
March	Leadership Ministry Board	Jo Doris Frye, Randy Frye, Dennis Leonard Family, Bobbie Wright
April	Christian Education/ Learning Ministry Team	Pastor Gil & Karen Gilbert  Easter Breakfast 4/16/17 - Dennis & Nancy Leonard & Family
May	Mr. Biven's Learning Hour Class <b>(CONFIRMED)</b>	Pastor Gil
June	No Lunch Served	No Breakfast Served
July	No Lunch Served	No Breakfast Served
August	No Lunch Served	No Breakfast Served
September	No lunch - Labor Day	Learning Hour Classes - Rally Day
October	Christian Education/ Learning Ministry Team	Carl & Glennie Beam, Lorene Heavner, Gary Leatherman, Dan & Tricia Panek
November	Chancel Choir	Pastor Gil & Karen, Joy Heavner, Don & Nicky Jarrett, Mike & Debi Pisko
December	Christian Education/ Learning Ministry Team	Biggerstaff's

**TO KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST NEWS** around the Church there are several online resources. If you do not have access to the internet maybe a family member or friend could show you some of the resources. The following links are very informative.

- North American Lutheran Church - NALC <http://thenalc.org>
- Carolinas Mission District <http://carolinasnalc.org>
- Carolinas Lutheran Women <http://carolinaslutheranwomen.org/>
- Women of the NALC - WNALC <http://thenalc.org/congregationally-focused-womans-ministry>
- Samaritan's Purse [www.samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org)

# Grace Notes

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