

GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC
email: gracencalnewton@aol.com website: www.gracelutheran-newton.org Church Office: 704-462-1035
Volume 225, Number 3 **MARCH 2022**



LENT is the 40 days before Easter. During this time, the people of God are called to commemorate and reflect on the Lord's passion through spiritual preparation, conversion and penance. This Holy Season is an invitation to renew our baptismal call...to live as sons and daughters of God and disciples of Christ, our Lord and Savior. It is time for self-examination and reflection.

SHROVE TUESDAY
MARCH 1, 2022
6:00 PM PANCAKE SUPPER
FELLOWSHIP HALL

ASH WEDNESDAY
MARCH 2, 2022
7:00 PM WORSHIP WITH
IMPOSITION OF ASHES



MARCH 13 – DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME
SET CLOCKS AHEAD ONE HOUR

From the Pastor's Perspective...



Dear Brothers and Sisters at Grace Church...

I am taking a little different stance with my Pastor's Letter to the Congregation this month. There have been more articles about women in the ministry, for and against, and I want to bring some of that discussion to you.

The question asked to me recently was "did Jesus have women disciples?" Duh, it's right there in Luke 8. Yes! Think about Joanna. She is "the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward." To us, "steward" sounds like a house servant. But the Greek word actually means this Chuza was the manager of his estates (which sprawled all over the country!) and the treasurer of the realm, and arguably in the top 5 wealthiest, most powerful men in the country! And his wife traipsed off after Jesus, who was a critic of Herod and all he was doing in his estates and throughout the realm – and is investing their family funds in this radical itinerant preacher! Just jaw-dropping stuff. Did the marriage survive?

And then there is Mary Magdalene, listed as one of those providers. She had met Jesus, without a doubt, in her hometown of Magdala when he preached in their synagogue (which archaeologists have excavated). Magdala was a prosperous fishing industry village. Was she, or her family, relatively affluent? She chased off after Jesus – and why? He was compelling – but for another very good reason also, "seven demons had gone out from her."

Not surprisingly, the men who were the fathers and official spin-doctors of the church for centuries assumed she was a prostitute. Nothing in the text even hints at this! Luke only goes so far. Jesus probably only went so far. But we'd be wise to listen to this short passage, absolutely revolutionary for ancient times – and a little bit counter-cultural in our times as well when women still bang their heads against a glass ceiling, where churches aren't sure they want women as pastors. Jesus recruited and empowered women in his movement, not to prettify things or to make the guys happier. Mary Magdalene was probably the best evangelist among the women who followed Jesus! So, we shouldn't be so hard on women in the ministry. At Grace, we are blessed to have four women who are Stephen Ministers and who do a magnificent job of lay-caring ministry. So, lift up our women pastors in your Lenten prayers. They can provide excellent care!

On the Lenten journey with you!

Pastor Gil Gilbert

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR MARCH

- ❖ Lector Stormy Shull
- ❖ Ushers Michael Hall and James Hall
- ❖ Communion Assistants Rick and Cindy Bivens
- ❖ Altar Preparation Herb and Libby Travis
- ❖ Offering Tabulators Todd Childers and Jason Yoder

*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 MARCH



| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 03/06 – LENT – NO FLOWERS | 03/20 – LENT – NO FLOWERS |
| 03/13 – LENT – NO FLOWERS | 03/27 – LENT – NO FLOWERS |

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 bulletin for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office the Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday. You can call the Church Office between 8:30 AM and Noon on Monday - Thursday, leave a note on the desk, or send an email to let us know the occasion or memorial for this wonderful gift of beatification of the worship.

ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD’S WORK FOR JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2022

| | 1/30/22 | 2/06/22 | 2/13/22 | 2/20/22 |
|------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Learning Hour | 13 | 17 | 13 | 14 |
| Worship | 36 | 49 | 38 | 41 |
| General Fund Offerings | \$2,145.00 | \$6,175.00 | \$2,730.00 | \$1,397.00 |

Needed Each Week = \$3,268.54

General Fund **Offerings, January, 2022** = \$14,238.76
 General Fund **Expenses, January, 2022** = \$11,957.93
 Difference = \$2280.83 (offerings exceeded expenses)

THE FRED T. FOARD SENIORS will meet for lunch at noon on Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at Grace Lutheran Church. All senior citizens and young at heart are invited and welcome to these gatherings.

THE MEN OF GRACE will meet on Saturday, March 12, at 9:00 AM at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Great food and great fellowship! Please come and bring a friend!

DURING LENT, we are called to use our time wisely. Every Friday during the season of Lent, we will all be praying and increasing that time each week. Please note on the Church Calendar for March 4, we begin by having 10 minutes of private prayer, which will increase by 5 minutes on each Friday during Lent (March 11 – 15 minutes, March 18 – 20 minutes, March 25 – 25 minutes, etc.)

DRIVE-THRU PRAYER AT MILLER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH will be held on the first Saturday of each month from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm, and everyone is welcome. The church is located at 2280 12th Avenue NE in Hickory.

CAROLINAS MISSION REGION – SPRING MISSION FELLOWSHIP EVENT – will be held on Saturday, May 21, 2022 from noon until 2:30 p.m. at Advent Lutheran Church (230 Oak Grove Road) in Kings Mountain, NC. At the last Carolinas Mission Region Convocation, it was made known that our congregations need more opportunities to come together for mission and fellowship. This will be an afternoon of fun, food and fellowship with fellow Christians from all over the Carolinas. This will be an outdoor event, so bring lawn chairs, picnic blankets, bug spray and sunblock. Each congregation will bring certain items to include in health/hygiene kits for NALC Disaster Response. Activities include assembling health/hygiene kits, hearing from Disaster Response Coordinator Mary Bates, dedicating the assembled kits, enjoying lunch, live music and lively fellowship!

CAROLINAS LUTHERAN WOMEN COUNCIL will hold its eleventh annual meeting on Saturday, April 2, 2022 at Faith Lutheran Church, 205 S. Main St., Faith, NC. Registration begins at 8:45 am, and the convocation will begin at 9:30 am. If you are interested in attending, please complete your registration by March 18th. There is an \$8.00 registration fee which includes lunch. The council minutes and meeting forms are available at www.carolinaslutheranwomen.org.

THE SEASON OF LENT

The Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday (March 2, Worship at 7:00 pm) and lasts 40 days excluding Sundays. Lent – the word originally meaning “Spring”, is to be understood as a time to reflect on our Baptism and its basis in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Lent is a time for confession, repentance, prayer and meditation.

During the Sundays of Lent, we will participate in the order for individual confession (LBW p. 155) and is part of the Compline Service. Emphasis is more on the “I” than the “we” and will provide for all worshipers the opportunity to really reflect on our confession.

The traditional color of Lent is purple to suggest somberness and solemnity. For Ash Wednesday, the preferred color is black suggesting the ashes to which all things must eventually return. The color for the remainder of Lent is purple. Flowers are not to be used during Lent to decorate the altar or chancel area. This is remembrance of the death of our Lord as he makes his way each Sunday to Jerusalem and the cross.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR US AS BELIEVERS

Some of you have asked me about the world situation and how it impacts the church, where can we find it in Revelation, and what exactly can we expect for the coming months and even years. I will address this dilemma in the April Edition of the GRACE NOTES Newsletter as many things have already begun to happen that will affect us all. Jesus warned us of these things and John included them in his book of Revelation. Stay tuned.

THE GOOD THAT LIES WITHIN

The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either — but right through every human heart — and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Great Divorce*, offers an interesting take on the presence of this tiny bridgehead of goodness. People from what might become hell take a bus-ride to the edge of heaven, and may stay. It is an offer that reveals the innermost heart – the ins and outs of how someone might walk away from heaven itself. There is a woman in the story who seems to have nothing wrong with her other than the habit of grumbling about everything. Lewis wonders what is so wrong with her. He is told:

The question is whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman—even the least trace of one—still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again. If there’s one wee spark under all those ashes, we’ll blow it till the whole pile is red and clear. But if there’s nothing but ashes, we’ll not go on blowing them in our own eyes forever. They must be swept up.’

‘But how can there be a grumble without a grumbler?’ The whole difficulty of understanding hell is that the thing to be understood is so nearly nothing. We wrestle with questions of “anthropology” when we think of such matters. By that, exactly what it means to exist as a human being. We are not legal objects, nor is our relationship with God rightly to be understood in juridical terms. We are beings and what we have with God and from God must be understood in terms of being. Being alone is real. There are no other categories of real. If it doesn’t have being – it doesn’t exist. This is the ground on which all of the doctrines of the Church were founded. The language of the Trinity, of Christology, of sacraments are propounded in terms of being. The repentance of sins is never anything less than resurrection from the dead. There is not a “reform” of that which is dead. It is a “new creation” in the words of St. Paul. It is the brushing away of the ashes that are so nearly nothing.

CHURCHES THAT REFUSE TO GROW...The Goal is Comfort

Unfortunately, many church members really don’t want to see their churches grow. Some of them are content with sufficient growth to pay the bills, but nothing else. Why is this seeming Great Commission disobedience is so pervasive in many churches. Here are six of the most common reasons.

1. Relational patterns are disrupted. Growth brings new members to ministries, groups and church social functions. Leadership may shift with the incoming influx of members. Many members are simply not comfortable with new attendees changing long-term relationship patterns.

2. Many are too comfortable with the status quo. They would rather obey the perceived mandate of the Great Comfort than the mandate of the Great Commission.

3. Some have a “me” view of congregational life. Thus, the church exists for me, myself and I. It’s all about MY worship style, MY programs, MY ministries and most importantly, MY pew. The church is more like a country club where I pay my dues and get my perks. If the new people get in my way as the church tries to reach them, I will raise my voice loudly.

4. Church members may want the pastor on call to take care of their needs. Too much growth spreads the pastor too thinly. If my pastor can’t meet my needs 24/7, then we have too many people in the church.

5. Others are simply uncomfortable with any emphasis on numerical growth. The pendulum has swung too far. For many years, many churches over-emphasized numerical growth, so much so that it seemed like increased numbers were an end in itself. Today, many church leaders and members resist any emphasis on numerical growth, often to the detriment of Great Commission accountability.

6. New people are different. New Christians and non-Christians are particularly different from most longer-term church members. Their presence can make churches messy and are open to change. Some members don’t like messy churches. Kind of like the Pharisees not liking Jesus relating to messy people.

BOARD NOTES

LEADERSHIP BOARD NOTES for the meeting held Sunday, February 20, 2022

Meeting Called to order by Alan Shull.

Devotions were given by Alan Shull followed by Prayer.

Present: Pastor Gil Gilbert, Alan Shull, Libby Travis, Michael Hall, Tim Eckard, Rick Bivens, Jason Yoder, Jeff Scronce, Todd Childers Absent: Gary Leatherman, Matt Speagle

The January minutes were read and approved.

Old Business

- Source for new doors contacted and info sent to George Garcia with Southwest Contractors for bid.
- The church bus was sold to the highest bidder for \$7500.00 (Florida Finance & Leasing). The sale is closed and the title has been transferred.
- The defibrillator has been ordered.

New Business

- A church Clean-Up is needed prior to Easter. This will be Saturday April 16 from 10 am to noon.
- The April Board meeting will be held on April 24 due to Easter on April 17.
- Motion made and seconded that the 2021 Board Officers remain the same for 2022. MOTION CARRIED.

Ministry Team Reports

- Property/Facilities – Scronce – Jeff will share contact info for Glass Works with the painter (Jamie Walker) so that they can coordinate their schedules regarding painting and installing glass panels over the stained-glass windows.
- Fire Marshall items – We need a CO2 monitor in Fellowship Hall, all smoke detectors that are part of the old security system must be removed, the old battery-operated smoke detectors are outdated and need to be replaced with lithium detectors. Pastor Gil will follow up with Unifour Extinguisher Co.
- Praise and Worship – Eckard – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper March 1, 6:00 pm (Shelley Scronce will organize). Ash Wednesday Worship with Imposition of Ashes and Order for Individual Confession March 2, 7:00 pm. The outside Cross will be put up on that day.

Community Outreach – Board – canned items for Souper Bowl continues through Lent.

Stephen Ministry – Travis – Supervision meetings begin on Monday 2/21/22.

Fellowship/Hospitality - Betty Wilfong to begin Senior Lunches in March.

Youth Ministry – Shull (VBS) – Discussion ongoing regarding theme and cooperation with other area churches (Zion, Plateau, and Wesley Chapel). Stormy Shull will meet with other churches to discuss.

Treasurer's Report: Finance / Stewardship – Childers, Bivens – Motion made and seconded to receive as information. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business *a motion to adjourn was made and seconded.* MOTION CARRIED.
Closing prayer by Pastor Gil.

Next meeting: Sunday, March 20 at 4:00 PM. Devotions – Todd Childers

Offering Tabulator – Todd Childers and Jason Yoder

Grace Notes

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church NALC
4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway
Newton, NC 28658