

# GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC  
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## LET US PRAY!



**40 DAYS OF PRAYERS** – The Congregation is being asked by the Call Committee for 40 days of prayers beginning on Easter Sunday in our search for a new pastor. The prayers need to be from the heart, but if you are struggling, prayers are in the hymnals. This is part of the Call Process. Please watch the bulletin for an announcement of a Congregational Workshop on a Saturday from 8:30 am – 2:00 pm. This workshop will be led by a member of the NALC Call Pastors, and is to involve all members of Grace to the task of finding a pastor. The Call Committee is excited to announce that one more step in the process has begun. The profile of Grace has been started (“A Want Ad”). The input from the Congregation thus far has been instrumental.

May God Bless You...Your Grace Call Committee

## FROM THE CALL COMMITTEE...

The Call Committee of Grace Lutheran Church took the first step in the process of calling a pastor for our church. We met Monday, March 4, 2024, through Zoom, with Pastor Shelly Shultz who is the NALC Call Committee Director. The Committee was given instructions to continue the process. This process will take all of the Call Committee plus the congregation to proceed. Each step will get us closer to having God's choice for us to come to realization. The main step will be to pray. We, the committee and the congregation, will need to pray daily for God's guidance in the process. (Prayers can be found in the Lutheran Book of Worship.)

The call process is a spiritual process of discernment led by the Holy Spirit. It is God's process, not the congregation's. It will take whatever time God intends, so there will be no rushing to judgment. For example, what may seem like an inordinate delay to some may indeed be the Holy Spirit working in the process and in a particular pastor's life so that he/she is available and open to call by the congregation. The goal is to allow God's will to unfold in such a way that the call committee, council and congregation recognize and receive the pastor whom God is calling to be their next pastor. The call process is about the revealing of God's will, not completing the process as quickly as possible.

Calling a pastor is not the equivalent of "hiring an employee." Many in the congregation will be tempted to think in terms of secular employment: develop a pool of applicants, interview them all, select the best one, and fire them if they don't work out. The call process is much more relational and covenantal. Calling a pastor is much more like a marriage, and the call process more similar to finding a mate for life. In this sense, going slowly and intentionally, seeking God's will, and developing a relationship are more important than lining up skills and needs. Keep in mind, not every pastor whom God calls to a particular congregation has all the gifts and skills needed to lead that congregation. But God gives these gifts and skills to those He calls! Few pastors have everything they need when called to a new congregation – but God calls them, then assists them in developing what is needed. Bear in mind, the call of a pastor is open-ended – valid until the pastor may be called elsewhere. In the Lutheran tradition, pastors are not "hired and fired." Pastors and congregations make a covenantal commitment to one another – to pray for each other, to support and encourage each other, to grow together as needed. It is not unlike, "till death do we part." The commitment is intended to hold the pastor and congregation together through good times and times of challenge.

Thank you,  
Call Committee

**\*ASHURE MINISTRY, FORMERLY KNOWN AS ECCCM  
(ECCCM Renames to Represent Expanded Service Area)**

**(\*This article contains excerpts from an e-mail to Grace Church dated 2-22-24.)**

On February 3, 2024, the board of directors of Eastern Catawba Cooperative Christian Ministry, Inc. (ECCCM) unanimously voted to change its name to Ashure Ministry. They faithfully wrestled with several new realities for the ministry, including their expanded service area. To acknowledge and address the community's growing needs and affirm their goal of serving more clients through high-quality crisis and food assistance, one of their strategic goals includes increasing the knowledge and understand the community has for the mission and work of the ministry.

To accomplish this goal, the board recognized the need for a renaming and rebranding process for the ministry. First and foremost, ECCCM includes "Eastern Catawba" in the name. As their service areas expanded to all of Catawba County, it was important to establish a name that didn't cause potential clients to question their ability to access services. Clients come first. A significant number of constituents and stakeholders either didn't know what ECCCM represented or confused them with another local nonprofit.

In August, a strong team of ECCCM supporters brought their creativity and passion for the ministry to the table as the renaming team. **Ashure**, known as Noah's pudding, is a grain pudding considered the first meal that Noah from the Old Testament in the Bible fed his family as they left the ark. It is considered a dessert or celebration dish. It symbolizes peace and harmony among all living creatures in God's creation. In principle, you eat only very little of the ashure you prepare. You share most of it with the poor, your neighbors, friends and others. This act generates abundance and strengthens community bonds.

The new ICON combines three essential elements. At the center is the cross that continues out into the world – a cross that directs and sends the ministry out into the world to serve all people in the name of Jesus. It features the people of God circled in community, reliant on each other for care and support. Each person reaches in and out as they are able at different times in their lives. This represents those who benefit from the services and those who support them. Finally, it features a color palette that reflects growth and new life. The colors are intentionally chosen to create calm and comfort.

Over the coming weeks, Ashure Ministry will begin transitioning all its social media accounts, emails, and website to the new name and branding. This change does not affect the types of programs and services they offer. The people of Catawba County may continue to apply for food and crisis assistance during the transition.



## WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR APRIL

- ❖ Lector Stormy Shull
- ❖ Ushers Jack Wilfong and James Hall
- ❖ Communion Assistants To be determined week by week
- ❖ Altar Preparation Herb and Libby Travis
- ❖ Offering Tabulators Todd Childers and Libby 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 APRIL

- 4/07 Open
- 4/14 Open
- 4/21 Kim Parker and Gary Leatherman
- 4/28 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 bulletin for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office the Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday. You can call the Church Office between 8:00 AM and Noon on Monday - Thursday, 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 FEBRUARY/MARCH

	<b>2/25/24</b>	<b>3/3/24</b>	<b>3/10/24</b>	<b>3/17/24</b>	<b>3/24/24</b>
Sunday School	6	4	4	12	8
Worship	48	45	30	40	47
General Fund Offerings	\$2,265.00	\$2,896.00	\$4,311.00	\$2,072.00	\$1,718.00

Needed Each Week = \$3,268.54

**General Fund Offerings, February, 2024 = \$11,888.00**  
**General Fund Expenses, February, 2024 = \$7,476.87**  
**Difference = +\$4,411.13 (offerings exceeded expenses)**

**THE RITE OF COMMISSIONING OF STEPHEN MINISTERS** will be held at the worship service on **Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>**. Lynette Momier and Sandi Tallant have completed Stephen Ministry Training. A covered dish reception will be held in the Fellowship Hall immediately following worship. We pray God's blessing on them as they minister to those in need.

**STEPHEN MINISTRY SUPERVISION** will be held on **April 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.**

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on **Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup> 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!

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD** is scheduled for **Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.**

**THE GRACE PRAYER LUNCHEON** will be held on **Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at noon in the Fellowship Hall.** This is a time for any adults from Grace and the community to come together for food and fellowship! Please give Betty Wilfong a call at (828) 461-6604 and let her know if you plan to attend.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS! VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL** will be held on **Sunday, June 9 through Thursday, June 13** at Plateau United Methodist in Plateau. We will be partnering with Zion, Sardis and Plateau. The theme this year is "Campfire Light." Please contact Stormy Shull for details if you are available to volunteer. Everyone is welcome! Come and join the fun!

**THE ASHURE (FORMERLY ECCCM) FOOD ASK FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL** is canned or dried beans. The food pantry will accept any food donations; however, the monthly food ask is a way to help make sure that certain items are stocked. Another way to help is to donate unwanted items in good condition to the Thrifty Threads & Treasures Store, which is currently holding its Spring-Cleaning Drive! It isn't just about tidying up – it's a heartfelt effort to extend support to those in our community who are facing a crisis. You can drop off donations Monday – Friday from 8:30am – 4:30 pm at 245 East N Street in Newton. It's a real way to make a difference right here in Catawba County!

**JOB OPENING** – Grace is now accepting applications for the part-time secretary/administrative assistant position. For details, see a Board Member.

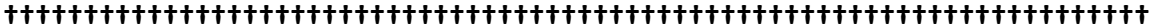
**SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**  
**LOOKING FORWARD IN 2024!**

In 2023, tens of thousands of volunteers, **including the disciples of Grace Lutheran Church**, contributed to Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse, by packing shoeboxes filled with fun toys, school supplies, and personal care items. The global Christmas project delivered these gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 100 countries, including many who are suffering from war, poverty, disease and disaster. Each shoebox is an opportunity to share the message of the Gospel and bring hope to children in need around the world.

The disciples at Grace are devoted to this yearly project; however, it has become more financially difficult due to inflation, the high cost of shipping, and the fact that Thanksgiving and Christmas are about a month apart. This year, we have started sending reminders in the monthly newsletters. Hopefully, this will remind us and give us more time to be able to budget and stretch our dollars. There are empty shoeboxes (located in the children's choir section) that are ready to be filled. When finished, please place them back in the children's choir section on an empty pew....**AND**

**SPECIAL OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE NOW AVAILABLE**  
**FOR CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX SHIPPING FEES!**

One of the disciples at Grace, Debra Hefner, had a great idea! She suggested that special envelopes be made available for the Christmas Shoebox Shipping Fees (similar to the ones we used to order Easter lilies). Last year, the shipping fee was \$10.00 per shoebox, which adds up quickly. So there is now a supply of special envelopes specifically for Christmas Shoebox Shipping Fees located in the Narthex, and another supply is located with the supply of shoeboxes in the children's choir section. These envelopes can be used any Sunday...just fill out the front of the envelope, insert your check or cash (please make checks payable to Grace Lutheran Church, For: Shoebox Shipping), and place it in the offering plate. (On the Sunday you want to use a special envelope, you do **not** need to use your regular numbered envelope. However, it is greatly appreciated when you use them on the other Sundays of the year.)



**MINUTES  
Of Leadership Ministry Board Regular Meeting  
Monday, March 18, 2024**

- Call to Order**    Called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Tim Eckard.
- Devotions**     By Alan Shull
- Roll Call**       Present:    Tim Eckard, Jason Yoder, Rick Bivens, Alan Shull, Jeff Scronce  
Absent:    Todd Childers, Libby Travis, Sheila Drum
- Minutes**        Minutes were approved as written for Regular Meeting of February 19, 2024.

**New Business**

- A. New Jerusalem Lutheran Church reached out to request that their Day Camp Counselors for the Solid Rock Day Camp be able to stay at the parsonage during their camp this year. They were approved last year, and there were no issues at that time. The Board approved for their camp counselors to stay again this year June 16<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>.
- B. Yoder National Reunion Committee reached out about having their 2025 National Reunion here at Grace. Rick will meet with a representative to obtain more information.
- C. Need an organist for June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Old Business**

- A. The Call Committee held an organizational meeting on Sunday, February 18<sup>th</sup> after Worship.
- B. The search for a replacement for Pam Tallent is ongoing. The job posting will be shared with other local Lutheran churches and ECCCM.
- C. Four new side doors for the church were installed March 12<sup>th</sup>.
- D. The weather stripping and finishing was completed on the church front doors.
- E. Fellowship Hall locks scheduled to be changed out on 3/20/24.

**Ministry Team Reports**

- A. Praise and Worship – Tim Eckard
  - 1. We have Pastors scheduled for all events through the end of April. Pastor Gary Coble will be here on April 7<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Brack East will lead worship on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.
- B. Stephen Ministry – Libby Travis
  - 1. Lynette Momier and Sandi Tallant have completed Stephen Ministry Training. They will be commissioned on Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup> with a reception to follow worship in the Fellowship Hall.

