

# Grace Notes



Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton, NC

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9:30am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service with Communion

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## **What is Your Spiritual Temperature: The Holy Spirit Fires Up the Church**

*An Easter/Pentecost Message from Pastor Doug Hefner*

It has been a joy for me to share the beautiful, powerful and inspiring resurrection stories of our risen Lord Jesus and what they mean for us. These stories are our stories too as they were written for us, that we too might believe and have life. ***John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*** One of my favorite Easter stories is about the two disciples (not part of the twelve but may have been part of the 70) who walked the long road back to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-45). They were discouraged, disappointed, and felt hopeless. For them it was all over, for they “had hoped” that Jesus would be the one to redeem the people. But on the way, the risen Christ meets and talks with them, hearing their grief and discouragement. Our risen Lord continues to walk with us today along the journey of our lives. Jesus continues to minister to them by teaching the Word of God, Scripture. Jesus is the living Word, the Word made flesh. He gives them a Bible Study if you will about how all of Scripture points to Jesus as the promised Messiah. Jesus WALKS with us and is the WORD which reveals to us the Truth and promises of God.

As they come close to their home, the Emmaus disciples WELCOME Jesus to be a guest in their home. How do we welcome Jesus to our homes today? We pray, we read His Word, and we share His love and care with others. Matthew 25 reminds us that when we visit, care for, clothe, feed or help in any way the least of these, we are essentially caring for Jesus in our neighbor. And we see the risen Lord in WORSHIP. As they gathered at

the table, Jesus took the bread, blessed it (gave thanks), broke it and gave it to them to eat. The risen Lord turned this meal of hospitality into the Lord's Supper. In the breaking of the bread, their eyes were opened and they saw the risen Lord. Jesus' actions and promises in the meal revealed his presence with them. That's when they recalled that on the way, when Jesus was opening the Scriptures to them, **their hearts burned within them**. In the middle of night, they made their way back to the community of faith to share the good news that they had seen the Lord. WITNESSING is another way we share the risen Lord with others. How do we introduce others to our Lord and Savior Jesus? We share the Word and we share what the Lord has done for us. We WALK with others in their trials, share the life-changing WORD of God, WELCOME them through caring service, invite them to WORSHIP as we give WITNESS to the Gospel of God's love in Christ!

The Lord can give us new life and hope in the midst of our discouragement and despair. In the power of the Holy Spirit Christ can transform cold or lukewarm hearts and set our hearts on fire again with His love and grace. On Pentecost (June 8) we celebrate God's gift of the Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete* (Greek for "One who walks beside us", also translated as Comforter, Helper, Guide, Advocate, Teacher). On the Day of Pentecost flames of fire appeared above the disciples and the faithful, reminding them of the new life and power God was giving to be His people. On that day the Church was born and what an amazing day it was. Peter preached the good news and 3,000 people came to faith and were baptized. We need the Spirit's power today as we cannot be the Church without the Spirit. We are called to go into a world that is full of cold hearts. Jesus in Matthew 24:12 said this about the last days: ***"Because of the increase of wickedness (lawlessness), the love of most will grow cold, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved."*** As we share the good news, cold hearts can come alive with the Spirit's fire. So let us stand firm on Christ our solid foundation and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps even more dangerous than being cold is being lukewarm. Jesus once again was speaking to the early Church through St. John in the Book of Revelation 3:15-17, ***"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!\_<sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.\_<sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."*** The problem here is that those who once heard the good news of God's love in Christ and came to faith are now no longer living in faith. Instead of trusting in Jesus, they instead trust in their own prosperity, strength, and resources. And because of that they are of no use to anyone. In reality they have put their faith aside and no longer act on it by turning to the Lord for

forgiveness, strength and direction. They no longer serve the Lord nor live a passionate life of faith. How sad!

**We don't want to be cold hearted or lukewarm; we want to be on fire in the Spirit of God!** Like the Emmaus disciples, Jesus walks with us, opens our hearts and minds through the Word, sets our hearts on fire as we head down a new road of serving and glorifying Him. May the Holy Spirit renew and restore the fire of faith in our hearts as we answer God's call: Here am I Lord, send me! With burning hearts, the Emmaus disciples ran toward the Cross of Jesus and they also ran toward the gathered community of faith. I want to encourage you to do the same thing. Turn to the Lord and ask for God's Spirit to fall afresh on you and set your heart afire with His love. Also, do not neglect to gather with the community of faith, the Church, in worship, Bible Study, service and witness. I look forward to seeing you in Worship and in our ministry together for God's glory and the building up of God's people!

*In Christ's Service, Pastor Doug Hefner*

### **"Because He Lives I Can..."**

This sermon series is based on the inspirational hymn written by Bill and Gloria Gaither. The chorus reminds us of the promise of the resurrection: ***Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living, Just because He lives!*** (see April newsletter for the full story of this beautiful song and a description of the series).

#### **May 4, 2025 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun of Easter, "Because He Lives We Can Experience and Share God's Love",**

***John 21:1-19***, Unsure of what to do the disciples returned to their life of fishing. Their nets and their hearts came up empty. The risen Lord appears, filling their nets and their lives with love. Three times Peter is asked by Jesus, "Do you love me?" as Jesus calls Peter to tend and care for the flock of God, the Church.

#### **May 11, 2025 4<sup>th</sup> Sun of Easter, Mother's Day: "Because He Lives We Have the Good Shepherd and His Abundant Life"**

The gospel message for the day is from ***John 10***, where Jesus reminds us that he is the Good Shepherd, who gathers us into His family and watches over and cares for us so that we might have "life and have it abundantly."

Mothers and Godly women are a lot like a good shepherd as they love, care for, protect, and lead their families.

**May 18, 2025 5<sup>th</sup> Sun of Easter: “Because He Lives We Can Be Witnesses for Christ”,  
Acts 11:1-18**

**Luke 24:36-53**, As Jesus assured the disciples of His love and presence, He also sent them out to be witnesses of His love. St. Peter in Acts 11 shares how God led him to witness to the Gentiles through his vision and experience with the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his family.

**May 25, 2025, 6<sup>th</sup> Sun of Easter “Because He Lives We are Connected to Christ the True Vine to Grow and Be Fruitful in Love”** Our Gospel reading is **John 15:1-17**. Jesus tells us that He is the Vine and that we are the branches. Connected to Jesus and His love, our lives bear the fruit of His love for the world. Jesus calls us to abide in His love as we love others in His name. Our first lesson for this day is **Acts 16:9-15** (story of Lydia). St. Paul preaches the Gospel to Lydia and the other women and God brings Lydia to faith. She and her family are baptized and her life bears great fruit as her home becomes the place for the emergence of the Philippian Church! On this Memorial Day weekend we will also remember our service men and women who gave their lives to bring forth the fruit of peace and security.

**June 1, 2025 6<sup>th</sup> Sun of Easter: “Because He Lives We Can Be Encouraged and Encourage Others”**

Acts 16:16-34, Psalm 97, Revelation 22, John 16:12-22 In Acts 13:1-15, Paul is sent out with Barnabas whose name means “encouragement.” Indeed Paul was encouraged by his friendship and partnership with Barnabas as they were sent to proclaim the gospel. In John 16:23-33, Jesus encourages the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. We are encouraged by God in Christ and as we are filled with the Spirit, we are called to encourage others! Let’s be encouragers!

As we begin the season of Pentecost we will start a new sermon series: ***“Spirit Driven with Hearts on Fire”***

**June 8, 2025: The Day of Pentecost** We will celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church as we remember the Day of Pentecost from **Acts 2:1-21**. Peter, full of the Spirit, began to preach the good news and on that day 3,000 people were moved by the Spirit to put their faith in Christ and be baptized in His name. We pray for God’s Holy Spirit to move among us as well, renewing our faith, mission and ministry as the body of Christ, the Church.

**You are invited to Sunday School:** For the next 3 weeks we will be using the series, “The Case for Easter” by Lee Strobel. Strobel was an investigative journalist who set out

really to disprove the story of Jesus. He found instead overwhelming evidence to help him come to faith and become a Christian apologist. His life story was shared in the movie, "The Case for Christ." Strobel has written a number of studies to help Christians look at the facts of Scripture that help us have confidence in God's Word and promises. Please join us for this study in the month of May.

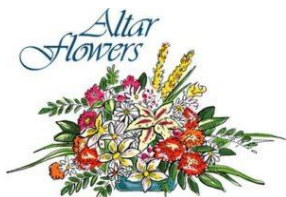
**Mid-week Wednesday Vespers at 6:30pm at Grace Union Church:** Everyone enjoyed having vespers at Grace Union during Lent and wanted to continue to have the services there. So please join us for Vespers in the month of May. The services last between 30 and 40 minutes. Please join us and invite a friend.

Thank you to all who helped with the Passover Seder Meal for Maundy Thursday! And Thanks to all who helped with the Easter morning breakfast. The breakfast was amazing. We are blessed at Grace with hard working servants of the Lord!

### **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR MAY**

|                        |                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ❖ Lector               | Stormy Shull                |
| ❖ Ushers               | Wayne Powell & Jason Yoder  |
| ❖ Communion Assistants | Sheila Drum & Cindy Bivens  |
| ❖ Altar Preparation    | Rick & Cindy Bivens         |
| ❖ Offering Tabulators  | Todd Childers & 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 MAY**

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 5/4 <b>OPEN</b>  | 5/18 Todd Childers |
| 5/11 <b>OPEN</b> | 5/25 <b>OPEN</b>   |

If you wish to place flowers on 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.* The liturgical color of the day is listed to assist you in selecting flowers appropriate for that Sunday. Please notify the Church Office by the Tuesday prior to your selected Sunday to ensure correct information is printed in the bulletin.

## ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR APRIL

|                        | 3/30/25 | 4/6/25  | 4/13/25 | 4/20/25 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Sunday School          | 7       | 13      | 13      | 13      |
| Worship                | 52      | 41      | 48      | 90      |
| General Fund Offerings | \$5,101 | \$1,455 | \$1,720 | \$2,000 |

Needed Each Week = \$3,507

**General Fund Offerings, March 2025 = \$16,734**

**General Fund Expenses, March 2025 = \$14,375**

**Difference = +\$2,359 (offerings exceeded expenses)**

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of May is pet food. We are doing great things at Grace in helping feed the hungry in our own community. Let's try to donate 2,000 in 2025! That would be around 170 pounds per month. We can do it! Let's come together to help reach this goal! Year-to-date the disciples at Grace have donated 448 pounds of food.

*Also, Please continue collecting **recycled grocery bags** for our food pantry. These bags are essential for packaging food and are always in short supply. Thank you for being such a vital part of this ministry. Every item you give helps bring comfort and dignity to those in crisis.*

**SAMARITAN'S PURSE UPDATE:** Due to increased regulations in many countries, beginning this year all types of soap will no longer be allowed in Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts. Any soap received in shoebox gifts will have to be removed at our Samaritan's Purse Processing Centers to help ensure the safe delivery of every gift and to avoid any complications with customs.

**CAROLINAS MISSION REGION CONVOCATION** Will be held at Christ's Lutheran Church in Stanley, NC on Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 12pm to 7pm and Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> from 8:30am to 2pm. Attending will be Pastor Doug Hefner, Rick Bivens, Cindy Bivens, and Todd Childers. Please pray for all as we join with other congregations in our region for two days of prayer, work, and fellowship.

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held at **on Wednesday, May 7th at 12:00 noon** at Blackburn Baptist Church. All are invited!

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on **Saturday, May 10th at 9:00am** at Four Peas in a Pod Restaurant on Highway 70 in Conover. Great food and great fellowship! Please come and bring a friend!

**MOTHER'S DAY** is Sunday, May 11. Be sure to remember Mom on this special day!

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD** is scheduled for **Monday, May 19th at 6:00 pm.**

**MEMORIAL DAY** is Monday, May 26. It is a day to honor and mourn those who died in service with the United States Armed Forces for the cause of our freedom.

### **VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

Vacation Bible School will take place at Grace from June 1<sup>st</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>. Other participating churches are Sardis Lutheran, Zion Lutheran, Old St. Paul's Lutheran, Wesley Chapel Methodist, and Plateau Community Church. Please reach out to the VBS team if you would like to participate.

### **RIGHTNOW MEDIA**

Don't forget to activate your free membership to RightNow Media, the world's largest streaming library of video Bible study resources. You should have received an email invitation for FREE access – if you haven't received it yet, be sure to check your spam or promotions folder. To get started, simply click the link in the email, create your free account, and start browsing more than 20,000 inspiring videos. We pray that RightNow Media will be a blessing to you and your family!

Visit <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/glcnc> OR text the code GLCNC to 49775.

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