

# 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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***“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!” Psalm 33:12***

## **A Message from Pastor Doug Hefner**

When we think of July, we automatically think of our nation’s birthday (July 4, 1776) and the celebration of Independence Day. Our country’s ancestors had a vision for a new nation and a new way of life and government as they wrote the Declaration of Independence, declaring our nation’s independence from England. In the Declaration of Independence we read these words, ***“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”*** Let us give thanks to God for the freedoms we enjoy as a nation and remember the people who sacrificed so much for that to be possible. Someone has said that ***“the temptation is to enjoy the fruits of citizenship without tending the tree of liberty.”*** We are called to tend the tree of liberty by acts of service and sacrifice in our own generation; to keep this vision alive and moving forward.

The greatest freedom we know is the freedom that has been given to us in Christ Jesus. Jesus said in John 8: ***“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”*** In John 8 Jesus reminds us that we are all slaves to sin and because of that sin, we are separated from God and one another. Jesus died for us on the cross and rose again so that we might be forgiven and welcomed into the body of Christ, the Church. Jesus reminds us that we are to continue in God’s Word so that we will know the truth of our sinful situation and what God did for us in Christ to bring us reconciliation and freedom. The truth of God’s love for us in Christ sets us free from sin,

death and the devil. We are most free when we fully surrender to the Lord Jesus – every part of our lives!

We are set free to glorify God, to love, serve and worship God, and love our neighbor as ourselves. St. Paul writes in *Galatians 5:1, 13* ***For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*** St. Paul reminds us that those who are free in Christ become His servants by serving others. We are called to use our God-given freedom to make a difference in the world. Indeed we love the freedoms God has granted to us, but let us also live in those freedoms as we follow our Lord and serve Him as we love and serve others in His name. Let us proclaim the freedom Christ has won for all people and let us not use our freedom for our own self-indulgence and sinful selfishness. Whenever we are exercising our “freedoms” we must always ask ourselves, “As I do this am I living up to God’s call to love and to care for my neighbor as myself?”

As we gather to remember and celebrate the freedoms that we enjoy in America, let us first remember and give thanks to God for our true freedom in Christ. We are forgiven in Christ and we are set free in love to live in Christ’s love and to love others in Christ’s name. Let us celebrate and give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy as God’s people and as Americans. May we not forget that we are called to live in those same freedoms and serve others in Jesus’ name. The best way to live out our freedoms as Americans is to live in the freedom of Christ and His promises and call to earthly and heavenly citizenship!

God’s Peace be with you all, ***In Christ’s Service, Pastor Doug Pastor Doug Hefner***

**Summer Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus:**  
**“The Amazing Life-Changing/Challenging Stories of Jesus”**

We all love a good story, especially the stories that capture our attention and imagination. A good story will always have some kind of impact upon us. Some stories inspire us; others challenge us and make us think about life and faith in new ways. That’s why we remember stories, either fact or fiction, that teach us important lessons and call us to a new way of living. There are about 40 parables in the gospels that Jesus used to teach us about God and God’s Kingdom principles. One of the best definitions I have heard of a parable is that it is ***“an earthly story with a kingdom or heavenly principle to teach us.”*** Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary gives this definition: ***“a parable is a short, simple story designed to communicate spiritual truth, a religious principle, or***

*moral lesson; a figure of speech in which truth is illustrated by a comparison or example drawn from everyday experiences.”* The Greek word for parable literally means to **“place something alongside of;”** in the case of a parable, it is a story that is placed alongside of a spiritual truth to illustrate that truth so that we might understand the truth and apply it to our lives. Jesus told a parable about hearing and applying God’s Word or Story in our lives (Matthew 7:24-29) as He concluded His Sermon on the Mount. The wise person hears God’s Word and applies it faithfully. They are like the wise person who built their house upon the rock. When the storms come, as they will do in our lives, the wise person’s home and life had a strong foundation and withstood the power of the storm. Those who don’t hear God’s Word or don’t apply it to their lives are like the foolish person who built his house upon the sand.

As Jesus traveled through the countryside teaching about the Kingdom of God, he would often tell stories about everyday events that were happening right before them, like the Parables of the Sower and the Different Types of Soil (Mark 4, Luke 8, Matthew 13), the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13), and the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13). Jesus used stories to teach important principles like forgiveness and reconciliation like the Parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18), and the Parable of the Creditor and Two Debtors (Luke 7). When Jesus taught about the importance of prayer he used the stories of The Persistent Widow (Luke 18) and the Friend in need at midnight (Luke 11). Jesus taught stories about humility (the Pharisee and Tax Collector- Luke 18 and the Lowest Seat in the house- Luke 14); about God’s gracious invitation (Parable of the Great Supper Luke 14 and Parable of the Wedding Feast- Matthew 22); about individual responsibility (Parable of the Talents – Matthew 25, Parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids- Matthew 25); about the cost of discipleship and faithfulness (Parables of the builder and king at war- Luke 14, Parables the Watchful Servants and the Faithful/ Evil Servants- Luke 12). These stories help to illustrate the grace and love of God in our lives: the Story, the Word made flesh, the Good News, the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

I will be preaching on the parables of our Lord in the upcoming weeks. Here is an outline of the sermon series based on the parables of Jesus. I will use mainly St. Luke since we are focusing on St. Luke this year, unless the parable is found only in another Gospel.

**July 6** – Parable of the Sower and Types of Soil (Luke 8:4-15) “The Master Gardener” Parables of the Treasure, Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13), The Builder, King in Battle (Luke 14) “The Treasure and Cost of Freedom” – A special Independence Day Message.

**July 13** – More Seeds! The Wheat and the Tares, The Mustard Seed, Yeast (Matthew 13:24-43) – “In the Hands of God, the Small Become Great”

**July 20** – Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) “Taking Care of (Kingdom) Business!”

**July 27** - Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12)/Parable the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16) “Bigger Barns or Bigger Hearts?”

**August 3** – Parables of Persistent Widow, Friend in Need at Midnight “Living on a Prayer!”

**August 10** – Parables of the Lowest Seat, Pharisee and Publican “O Lord it’s Hard to be Humble”

**August 17** – Parable of the Great Dinner, Invitation, Luke 14:15-24, Wedding Feast Matthew 22:2-14

**August 24** - Back to School Blessing of the Bookbags, Parables about wise living: The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids Matthew 25:1-13 and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

**August 31** – Parables about the Coming of Christ – Parable of The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants as They Await The Masters Return (Matthew 24:45-51) and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

### **GRACE HOMECOMING CELEBRATION SEPTEMBER 7**

On September 7 during worship we will celebrate Homecoming and 228 years of God’s grace and blessing upon the body of Christ here at Grace. The board felt that since this is Pastor Doug’s first Homecoming, he should preach the Homecoming Sermon. Pastor Doug would like to put together a planning team for Homecoming. If you would like to serve on the planning team, please see Pastor Doug. We plan to send out invitations to all families who have been a part of the Grace family over the years. And of course we will have the covered dish meal after the service. Some churches also plan a couple of revival services in the week following Homecoming and invite guest preachers. This is something that the planning team will consider. We would love to hear your feedback on how to make this a wonderful Homecoming. We are only a couple of years from our 230<sup>th</sup> Year celebration. We want to make this one a great celebration as well.

### **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SET FOR AUGUST 17**

In May, Pastor Doug, Rick and Cindy Bivens, and Todd Childers attended the Carolina’s Mission Region Convocation. During the business portion of the meeting, a resolution was passed by the assembly. However, it must also be voted on by each congregation for it to be approved. It is a very simple resolution, basically updating the language and the number of lay delegates who can attend the Region convocation. We will have a simple vote, probably by hands, voting yes for the change or no for the change. Here is the current article with the proposed change below it.

**Current Article 7.02** Delegates with voting privileges at a Convocation of the Carolinas Mission Region, or any Convocation of a member Mission District (see Art. 7.05), shall be the ordained ministers of the Mission Districts that comprise the Carolinas Mission Region of the NALC and the official lay delegates of the congregations of the Mission Districts in the Carolinas. Each congregation of the Carolinas Mission Region of the NALC shall elect one lay delegate to the Convocation for every 400 baptized members, or fraction thereof, of such congregation. In the event that the total number of lay delegates elected pursuant to the preceding sentence is less than the total number of ordained clergy, the Regional Council of the Carolinas Mission Region of the NALC (or, in the case of a specially called Mission District Convocation, the Regional Council representatives of the Mission District in question) shall apportion additional lay delegates based on the relative size of the congregations in the member Mission Districts.

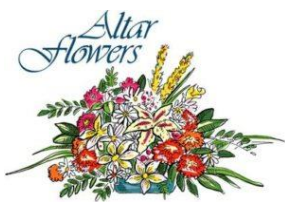
**Proposed change to Article 7.02** Those with voting responsibilities at a Convocation of the Carolinas Mission Region, or any Convocation of a member Mission District, shall be the ordained ministers of the Mission Districts that comprise the Carolinas Mission Region of the NALC and the official lay delegates of the congregations of the Mission Region and Mission Districts. Each congregation may send up to two lay delegates to the annual CMR Convocation and Mission District Convocations. Lay persons chosen by their congregations to represent them at the Convocation are delegates. Clergy and delegates have voice and vote.

**SOLID ROCK DAY CAMP** Pastor Doug would like to thank everyone who helped with the Solid Rock Day Camp! The 27 children had a wonderful time during week. Special Thanks to Debra Hefner, David and Belinda Wilfong, Sherry Biggerstaff, Nicky/Don Jarrett and grandson Steven, and Nancy Willis. Thanks to everyone who gave gifts to the camp and thanks to Grace for hosting the camp! The 6 counselors did a great job and we are thankful for their energetic and contagious faith! Let's pray that the rest of the summer goes well for the Solid Rock Day Camp as it travels to other parts of the Carolina's region.

### **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR JULY**

❖ Lector	Tim Eckard
❖ Ushers	Chris Jarrett & Tim Leatherman
❖ Communion Assistants	Sheila Drum & Cindy Bivens
❖ Altar Preparation	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 JULY**

7/6	<b>OPEN</b>	7/13	<b>OPEN</b>
7/20	<b>OPEN</b>	7/27	<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 JUNE**

	5/25/25	6/1/25	6/8/25	6/15/25	6/22/25
Sunday School	7	20	5	10	10
Worship	42	42	38	43	40
General Fund Offerings	\$1,755	\$1,820	\$1,072	\$2,460	\$1,520

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of June is snacks for kids. 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 727 pounds of food.

**CATAWBA COUNTY HUNGER WALK**

The Catawba County Hunger Walk will be on Sunday, October 5th in beautiful downtown Newton! Why Join the Hunger Walk? ♥ It’s a chance to live out our faith through action. 🤝 It's a family-friendly event where we come together as the body of Christ. 🥗 Every dollar raised will be divided equally between Ashure Ministry, The Corner Table, and Hickory Soup Kitchen to help them continue fighting food insecurity in Catawba County. ***Please save the date!***

**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.

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held **on Wednesday, July 2nd at 12:00 noon** at Sardis Lutheran Church. All are invited!

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on **Saturday, July 12th 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!

**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD** is scheduled for **Monday, July 21st at 6:00 pm.**

### **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. Please share this information with family, friends, neighbors, or anybody that you want to share the Gospel with and invite to Grace. This is our gift to all we meet.

**WORSHIP ASSISTANT VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!** - Please offer your services as a Lector, Usher, or Communion Assistant for the upcoming months. Worship Assistants help to make our worship experience more meaningful. If you would like to serve during a particular month, please notify Todd Childers.

# Grace Notes

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