

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost



September 21, 2025 10:30 AM

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: gracenalcnewton@aol.com

www.gracelutheran-newton.org

Rev. Doug Hefner cell: (980) 234-8848 email: pastorhefner@aol.com

Sandi Tallant – Organist Todd Childers – Administrative Assistant

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9am to 1pm

Tuesday and Thursday 12pm to 4pm

WELCOME TO ALL WHO WORSHIP at Grace Church this morning as we gather to worship the Father, + Son and Holy Spirit in truth. As you entered the sanctuary today, you received this bulletin containing the order for worship and announcements. Please also notice the Prayer List where you will find a listing of all the known prayer concerns. You are invited to use this as a guide for your personal prayers throughout the coming week. If you need information about our congregation or if you'd like to update your information, make sure to fill out the yellow Worship Today Form and place it in the offering plate at the time of the offering. If you have a prayer concern, indicate that on your Worship Today Form at the bottom or on the reverse side. If you are seeking a Church Home or would like more information about Grace, please contact Pastor Doug (980) 234-8848.

**Stand Hymnals in Pew Rack: LBW = Green WOV = Blue TCH = Burgundy*

PRELUDE *Please observe silence for meditation and prayer.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*** BRIEF ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the aid of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that, attentive to your Word, we may confess our sins, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

P: Trusting in God's steadfast love, grace and forgiveness in Christ, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection and confession of our sins before God and one another.

P: Merciful Father,

C: we have sinned against You and one another. We do not fully live as Your beloved daughters and sons. We use Your gifts to our own ends and neglect your call to bear fruit in Your world. Look upon us in mercy and forgive us all our offenses, and cleanse us from proud thoughts and empty desires. By your grace draw us near to you, our refuge and our strength; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The minister stands and addresses the congregation.

P: We are reconciled to God through Christ; for His sake, God does not count our trespasses against us. Once dead in sin, we are now alive to God. Once lost, we now are found. God clothes us in the finest robe of all, the righteousness of Jesus Christ our Lord, so that we can celebrate the joy of our salvation. In the mercy of almighty God, Christ

died for us while we were sinners and through Christ, God has granted us the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

* **GATHERING HYMN** “Here I Am, Lord”

WOV 752

* **GREETING**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **C: And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving and faithful Lord, care for your Church with perpetual mercy. Since we totter and are sure to fall without your grace, remove what will harm us and arrange what will make us whole. Grant this, we pray, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The congregation may be seated.

FIRST READING: Genesis 28: 10-19

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it^l and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “***Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.***” ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” ¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel (which means House of God).

L: The Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God**

PSALM 138

¹I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I will sing your praise.

²**I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your Name,
because of your love and faithfulness;**

³For you have glorified your name
and your word above all things.

⁴**When I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength within me.**

⁵All the kings of the earth will praise you, O Lord,
when they have heard the words of your mouth.

⁶**They will sing of the ways of the Lord,
that great is the glory of the Lord.**

SECOND READING: Hebrews 11:39 – 12:3

³⁹Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect. **12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls or lose heart.

L: The Word of the Lord. C: **Thanks be to God**

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** GOSPEL ACCLAMATION “Surely the Presence”**

Refrain: Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place I can feel His mighty power and His grace

I can hear the brush of angels wings I see glory on each face Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

In the midst of His children the Lord said He would be It doesn't take very many, it can be just two or three

And I feel that same sweet spirit that I felt often times before Surely I can say I've been with the Lord

Refrain

***GOSPEL: Matthew 16: 13-20**

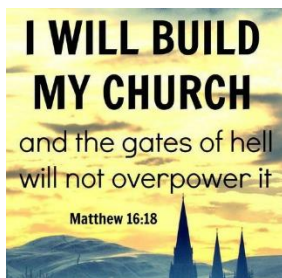
P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew. C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹³When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. ²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²²And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” ²³But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” ²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life^[g] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

L: The Gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to You O Christ!**

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE



SERMON

“Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church: Celebrating God’s Faithfulness in Ages Past and the Glorious Hope We Have in Christ for His Church for Years to Come!”
Pastor Doug

***HYMN OF THE DAY** “The Church’s One Foundation”

LBW 369

***THE APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

***PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Response at the end of each petition. P: Lord in your mercy, C: **Hear our prayer.**

***SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. C: **And also with you.**

Worshipers may greet one another with "the Peace of Christ."

The assembly may be seated.

* **OFFERING** In response to God's blessings, we offer our tithes to the Lord

HOLY COMMUNION – MEAL OF GRACE

* **OFFERTORY** Let the Vineyards



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our
cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were
sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the
hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we
of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence, and
give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

*** OFFERTORY PRAYER**

P: Holy and loving God, C: Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we here offer to you, to be salt for the world as you call us to agents of your grace and love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

***DIALOGUE AND PREFACE**

P: The Lord be with you. C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts. C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. C: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

***HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:
Heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

*** WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

*** LORD'S PRAYER**

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The Gifts of God for the People of God. C: Thanks be to God!

The assembly may be seated.

All are invited to receive Holy Communion.

COMMUNION SONG

Lamb of God



The congregation is invited to stand.

*** COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Now send us forth to be your people in the world, and to proclaim the Gospel this day and evermore, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

*** BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. Amen.

***SENDING HYMN "Go, My Children, With My Blessing "**

WOV 721

***DISMISSAL**

P: We are the Church, the body of our Lord, we are all God's children and we have been restored! As Christ's living stones built into His Spiritual House, the Church, may we in faith stand firm upon the solid foundation of Christ Jesus our Lord as we go in peace and joy to live out the Gospel in word and deed. **C: Thanks be to God!**

ALTAR FLOWERS are given to the Glory of God as we celebrate 228 years of God's faithfulness and blessings at Grace Lutheran Church by David and Belinda Wilfong.



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffry Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Glenda Childers, Pat Dietz, Lisa Childers Fox, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Larry Heavner, Lorene Heavner, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman (at Baptist Hospital), Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Tim Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe Momier, Jane Moss,

Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Helen Smith, Ethan Starnes, Sandi Tallant, Libby Travis, Shirley Warlick, Ken & Tirzah Welch, Scott & Carolyn Whisnant, and Nancy Willis.

Nursing Home: Juanita Haas (Trinity Village), Ted Whisnant (Trinity Village), Dan Panek (Trinity Ridge)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, Daniel Baucom, Ashlee Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Randy & Rita Neill, Anita Sabino, Karlee Speagle, Scott Speagle, and Robert Whisnant. Prayers for world peace and for our church, the United States of America, and especially the families of those who have given their lives in the service of our country and those who continue to protect our freedoms and for all members of our Armed Forces. Pray for Charlie Kirk and his family and for peace in our country.

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost

9:30am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

Wednesday

7:00pm – Vespers with Bible Study – Titus Part II (Chapter 3)

HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAY TO:

September 12 – Jeff Scronce

September 15 – Kathy Leatherman

September 25 – Joe Momier

September 13 – Debi Pisko

September 24 – David Wilfong

September 27 – Kandra Johnson

UPCOMING EVENTS

Vespers and Bible Study on Wednesdays at 7pm for September

Sept. 24 Bible Study -Titus Part II

September 21 Homecoming Sunday Worship at 10:30am followed by Covered Dish Dinner in the Fellowship Hall. Please invite friends, extended family, and neighbors! We have invitations for you to send.

September 28 9:30am Pray and Go Celebration Continental Breakfast

October 5 Catawba County Hunger Walk in downtown Newton at 3:00pm

October 12 at 5pm Blessing of the Pets Service (Shelter weather permitting) We will have a short service and a blessing for all the pets. Catawba Humane Society representative will be invited and we will receive an offering to benefit the care they provide pets in our area.

October 26 Reformation Sunday

October 26 Trunk or Treat Outreach Event with Hot Dogs for Community 5-7pm

See Pastor Doug if you would like to help; everyone is encouraged to participate so that we can reach out to our community with the love of Jesus.

November 2 – All Saints Day Service – we will remember and give thanks for all the Saints, especially those members who have died in the past year and are now with the Lord.

November 23 – Sunday Thanksgiving Service at Grace

November 26 – Community Thanksgiving Service at Grace, Wednesday

November 30 – First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 20, 17 – Midweek Advent Services 6:30 pm

December 24 – (Wed.) Christmas Eve – Candlelight & Holy Communion 7:00 pm

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



1797 – Grace Lutheran and Grace Union Church organized, united congregation of Lutheran and Dutch Presbyterians (Reformed), met for worship in local barns and homes.

1807 – First Union Church (2 story log building). Land bought from Samuel Jarrett (3 acres)

1858 – Brick Union Church was built.

April 5, 1942 – First Service in the new Grace Church building on Easter Sunday.

March 7, 1948 – Church building burned down, front doors survived.



VIEW OF BURNED CHURCH

July 17, 1949 – First service held in basement chapel.

March 26, 1950 – First service held upstairs in rebuilt church.

1952 – Parsonage built.

1964 – Fellowship Hall built.

1997 – Picnic Shelter built.



THE REV. HENRY BELK
LEONARD

Henry Belk Leonard, son of Mr. and Mrs. Vernon O. Leonard, was born February 18, 1920. He attended Blackburn High School and was graduated from Lenoir Rhyne College, Hickory, 1940, and from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S. C., 1943. He was ordained to the Gospel Ministry on July 11, 1943. On May 19, 1943, he was married to Miss Elizabeth Smith Bearden. They have one daughter, Linda Ann. Pastor and Mrs. Leonard have served the following parishes: Watauga Parish, Boone, 1943-44; Taylorsville Parish, 1944-46; Louisville, Mississippi, since December 1, 1946.



Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace
Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner Board President – Tim Eckard
Lector – Todd Childers Youth Leader – Stormy Shull
Altar Preparation – Sherry Biggerstaff
Communion Assistants – Tina Hefner & Sherry Biggerstaff
Ushers – Jacob Jarrett & James Hall
Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Tim Eckard

A Message from the Parsonage



In writing this message to be included in the historical booklet on the occasion of this Sesqui-Centennial anniversary of Grace Church we are mindful of the fact that we have entered into the labors of others who have come before us. What a splendid company of truly consecrated men and women, young and old, have held membership in this congregation, who are now a part of the great company of saints in Heaven! The former pastors—those who have laid the foundations and those who built thereon—all, with the exception of three, have joined that invisible company.

In this time of celebration, may we, therefore, remember with gratitude to God the laborers whose successors we are. At the same time may we not be unmindful of the fact that membership in this historic Grace Church is both an honor and a challenge. May we ever seek to prove worthy followers of those faithful and devoted souls whose unselfish and self-sacrificing labors made possible one hundred and fifty years of service for Christ in this community and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church throughout the world. May we, who have such a glorious heritage, respond whole-heartedly to the challenge to go forward by faith to win even greater glory for the Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us!

Very Sincerely,
THE REV. AND MRS. HOKE H. RITCHIE