

# 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

**Volume 228, Number 9**

**SEPTEMBER 2025**

## **Homecoming Sunday September 21 - Celebrating 228 Years of God's Faithfulness and the Faithful Witness of Grace Church!**

**Jesus said "On this rock I will build my church and  
the gates of hades/hell will not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18**

### **Message by Pastor Doug Hefner**

In the passage above we see the first time that Jesus uses the word "Church" in the gospels. In the rest of the New Testament the word "Church" is used 116 times (greatest use in 1 and 2 Corinthians -35 times and in the Acts of the Apostles – 21 times). The Greek word is "ekklesia" which means "called out ones" and can be a term used to refer to a special assembly of people "called out" for a certain purpose. Often the word "church" has been used to refer to a building, but we know that the Church is the body of Christ, the very people of God, redeemed in Christ. Many times, we refer to our worship service as "church", as in "let's go to church." And yes, an important part of what the Church does is worship God in spirit and truth. We gather around Word and Sacrament to give God thanks and praise and to be transformed in these gifts of God in Christ. But once again, we miss the power of the word. We can't go to church since we are the church! So, wherever we are, we are the church, the called out ones, living in grace and faith as we represent Christ to the world. A youth VBS song entitled "We Are the Church!" that I learned a long time ago says it perfectly:

**Chorus: We are the church, the body of our Lord;  
we are all God's children. We have been restored.**

**1** The church is not a building where people go to pray;  
it's not made out of stick and stones, it's not made out of clay.

**2** You can go to worship but you cannot go to church;

you can't find a building that's alive no matter how you search.

**3** The church is not a business, a committee or a board;  
it's not a corporation for the business of the Lord.

**4** The church, it is the people living out their lives,  
called, enlightened, sanctified for the work of Jesus Christ.

The Church is the body of Christ. Jesus made this promise to us, **“On this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell/hades will not prevail against it.”** If you read Matthew 16 you will see that this rock, this solid foundation is Christ and the confession of faith that Jesus is the Messiah, Christ, the Son of the living God! This was Peter’s confession when Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Jesus blessed Peter and his confession and said that His heavenly Father revealed this to Peter. Jesus also promises to **“build my Church.”** Only as Jesus works in and through us can the Church grow; in other words, it is not a human program or strategy but the very work of the Lord in and through us that grows and builds the Church. Jesus also reminds us that the Church will have its enemies but that nothing, not even the gates of hell/hades will prevail against it!

We each have seen the Christ in action here at Grace Church (the people of God). We visit and care/pray for when one of our brothers or sisters is hurting, or in the hospital or is grieving. We lovingly provide food for families in their time of grief. We gather for worship and praise God together, praying for one another, and walking together in faith. This summer we put our faith into action as we hosted a very successful and fun week of VBS and a week of the Solid Rock Day Camp. There are many stories of faith that we can share, after all we have 228 years of God’s faithfulness to recall just in our journey here at Grace. Please consider sharing some of those stories with me (in person, note, or email – [pastorhefner@aol.com](mailto:pastorhefner@aol.com)) and I will share some of these stories in the next few weeks, especially at homecoming. Each day I see you, the Church, in action. I see the NALC in action (see article after my letter for updates on our national Church, the North American Lutheran Church). I see the Church in the world in action. Jesus said, “I will build my Church!” And He is, in you and me, and in the world around us. He calls us out from sin, death, and darkness into the glorious light of forgiveness and new life. Thanks be to God!

This year the National Back to Church Sunday (Sunday Sept 21) falls on our Homecoming date. The theme is **“We are Stronger Together in Christ!”** based on the Scripture from Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12: <sup>9</sup> **Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.** <sup>10</sup> **For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.** <sup>11</sup> **Again, if two lie together,**

**they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.** This passage reminds us that together we can accomplish more, overcome setbacks, find comfort and help, and overcome enemies. The passage talks about two people and then refers to a three-stranded cord that is not easily broken. Many have taken this to mean the presence of another friend, Jesus, who is present in the relationships that bless us. He is that key strand that is woven into our relationships – marriage, family parent child, friends, coworkers and most specifically, the Church. Indeed together in Christ we are stronger! In Matthew 18:20 Jesus makes this promise: **“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.”**

National Back to Church Sunday (NBCS) which is the third Sunday in September, began in 2008 as a call to action and invitation – action for the church, invitation for the world. A single-day event focused on extending the invitation of the love, peace and hope of Christ to our friends and neighbors. A single day to reclaim the true nature of Church – exactly as Christ commanded. Incredibly, since then, more than 4-million Christ-followers have participated through over **30,000 churches**...and the movement is still growing. They have found through research that 82% of the people surveyed would come to church if invited by a friend or coworker or neighbor etc. However, they found that only 2% of church members were inviting people to come with them to their church. (yes you read that right). So we need to remember that every day is a day to welcome and invite others to worship, to ministry events, to fellowship with God’s people as we point them to a life-changing relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That’s why we all participating in the “Pray and Go Prayer Journey”! As we remember Whose and Who we are, we are encouraged and equipped to do what we are called to do in Christ which is welcome others in love as we have been welcomed in the Lord. Jesus said many times that as we welcome and care for the child, the sick, the imprisoned, hungry and the stranger, we have indeed welcomed Christ himself!

I am thankful to be pastor and a part of such a faithful, caring, friendly and generous church family. I see people living out their faith in Christ in many wonderful ways as I have listed above. Thanks be to God for you and these ministry opportunities to give God glory and to build up God’s people! There is more to come and I look forward to serving God together with you!

**May God bless you and keep you as we walk with Christ and one another in faith and love, Celebrating that We are Stronger Together in Christ, Pastor Doug Hefner**

## **Upcoming Events at Grace – Invite Others to Join Us!**

### **+Vespers and Bible Study on Wednesdays at 7pm for September (40 min service)**

On these Wednesdays we will gather at Grace Union at 7pm and use the Vespers service. Pastor Doug will read from the books below and share the key message of the book.

Please join us and invite your friends and family!

Sept. 3 Bible Study Focus - **Jude**; Sept. 10 Bible Study - **Philemon**

Sept. 17 Bible Study -**Titus Part 1**; Sept. 24 Bible Study -**Titus Part 2**

**+September 7** - We will celebrate Grandparents Day! We will give thanks to God not only for Grandparents, but all members of our family. We will also celebrate that we, the Church, are the family of God.

**+September 14** - DreamTeam Sunday – For worship, everyone is invited to wear your favorite team jersey (high school, college, or pro team) as we celebrate that we, as the Church, the body of Christ, are part of God's Dream Team. We will also talk about our ministry teams and invite everyone to be a part of the Dream Team. Weather permitting we will worship outside in the Shelter! Please join us – it's going to be a lot of fun and inspiration!

**+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 24** On this Sunday at 9:30am we will take a break from our regular Sunday School for the whole congregation to gather for the “Pray and Go” Celebration Continental Breakfast. Let us come together to encourage one another to continue to “Pray and Go” in Jesus’ name!!

**+October 5** Catawba County Hunger Walk in Newton at 3pm. See article on last page.

**+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. A Catawba Humane Society representative will be invited and we will receive an offering for them.

**+October 26** Reformation Sunday – Great Reformation Hymns, Scripture and Stories.

**+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 give thanks for all the Saints, especially those members/family/friends 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, Wednesday

**+November 30** – First Sunday of Advent

**+Dec. 3, 10, 17** – Midweek Advent Services 6:30pm

**+December 24** (Wednesday) Christmas Eve Candlelight and Holy Communion Service 7pm.

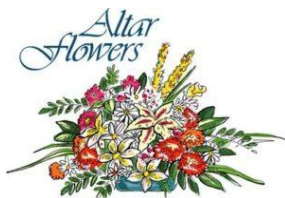
**PRAY AND GO PRAYER JOURNEY** Dear Grace Family, Thank you for going on the "Pray and Go" Prayer Journey for the last 30 days! September 1 is Day 30, when we Pray and Go as directed by the last chapter. I know how life is... things happen and we get busy. Some of you (including me) need a little more time to complete the journey. Maybe your spouse has had the book and you have not had time to catch up. Maybe you didn't include your children on this and could use some extra time to include them. Take more time in September to finish the book and complete the inviting activities for some of the chapters. **We will have a Pray and Go Celebration Continental Breakfast on September 26 at 9:30am in the Fellowship Hall.** You will be invited to share a story of how you invited, wrote, prayed for, and/or visited someone. We will also gather to encourage each other to make "Pray and Go" a way of life, a way of discipleship. Praying for, inviting, and sharing the Gospel are activities that we are blessed to do as God's people. God loves us in such an amazing way in Christ Jesus! How can we not share that Good News and invite others to experience this in the life of His Church! Remember this quote from the book: **"Once you have completed the thirty days, you will have taken fifteen days to pray about becoming outwardly focused. You will have studied five key Bible passages about reaching beyond yourself to others. You will have prayed in front of sixty homes in your community. You will have sent a note or email to five people who are not part of your church. And you will have specifically invited eight people to visit your church."**

This 30-Day Pray and Go journey will change your life and Christ's Church here at Grace. Imagine if 40 people complete this pray and go journey. What would the result be? 1200 days of prayer and being in God's Word, praying for 2,400 homes in our community/neighborhoods, sending a note or email to 200 people, and inviting 320 people to visit Grace to worship with us and encounter the love and grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus! Can you imagine the impact this could have on our personal life, marriage and family, in our work places and schools, and in our church and community. In the name of Jesus, let us continue to Pray and Go!

### **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR AUGUST**

❖ Lector	Todd Childers
❖ Ushers	Jacob Jarrett & James Hall
❖ Communion Assistants	Tina Hefner & Sherry Biggerstaff
❖ Altar Preparation	Sherry Biggerstaff
❖ Offering Tabulators	Todd Childers & Alan Shull

*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 AUGUST**

9/7 Todd Childers

9/14 **OPEN**

9/21 **OPEN**

9/28 Pastor Doug  
& Gabby

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 AUGUST**

	<b>7/27/25</b>	<b>8/3/25</b>	<b>8/10/25</b>	<b>8/17/25</b>	<b>8/24/25</b>
Sunday School	9	13	9	10	10
Worship	42	43	44	45	42
General Fund Offerings	\$2,115	\$5,150	\$2,609	\$1,375	\$2,455

**"The Story" Bible Study for Sunday School:** We are a third of the way through (11 out of 31 chapters) our overview of the Bible. We are wrapping up our study of 1 and 2 Samuel as we reflect upon the life of King David. Next, we will look at the life of King Solomon and the division that occurred after his reign. Please join us at any time during this study. Each week we give handouts for you to take home and go deeper in your study of God's Word.

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, September 3 at 12:00 noon at Laurel Hill United Methodist Church. All are invited!

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on Saturday, September 13th 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, September 15th at 6:00 pm.

**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.

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of September is peanut butter or jelly. 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 934 pounds of food.

**CCHUNGERWALK.COM**

**SPONSOR    START A TEAM**  
**RAISE SUPPORT    WALK**  
**SPREAD THE WORD**



**REGISTER NOW**

**CATAWBA COUNTY**



**HUNGER WALK**

**SUNDAY | 3PM**  
**OCTOBER 5, 2025**  
**DOWNTOWN NEWTON**  
(Frank & Sue Jones Amphitheatre)

**BENEFITING**



**Ashure MINISTRY**



**The Corner Table**



**HICKORY SOUP KITCHEN**

**WHY WE WALK**

To provide meals to the homes facing food insecurity in Catawba County!

**INFORMATION**

**2:00PM - Registration**                      **2:45PM - Awards**  
(Top Team Fundraiser, Largest Team, Top Individual Fundraiser and more)

**QUESTIONS**

<b>Ashure Ministry</b> (828-465-1702   ashureministry.org)	<b>The Corner Table</b> (828-464-0355   thecornertable.org)	<b>Hickory Soup Kitchen</b> (828-327-4828   hickorysoupkitchen.org)
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# Grace Notes

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