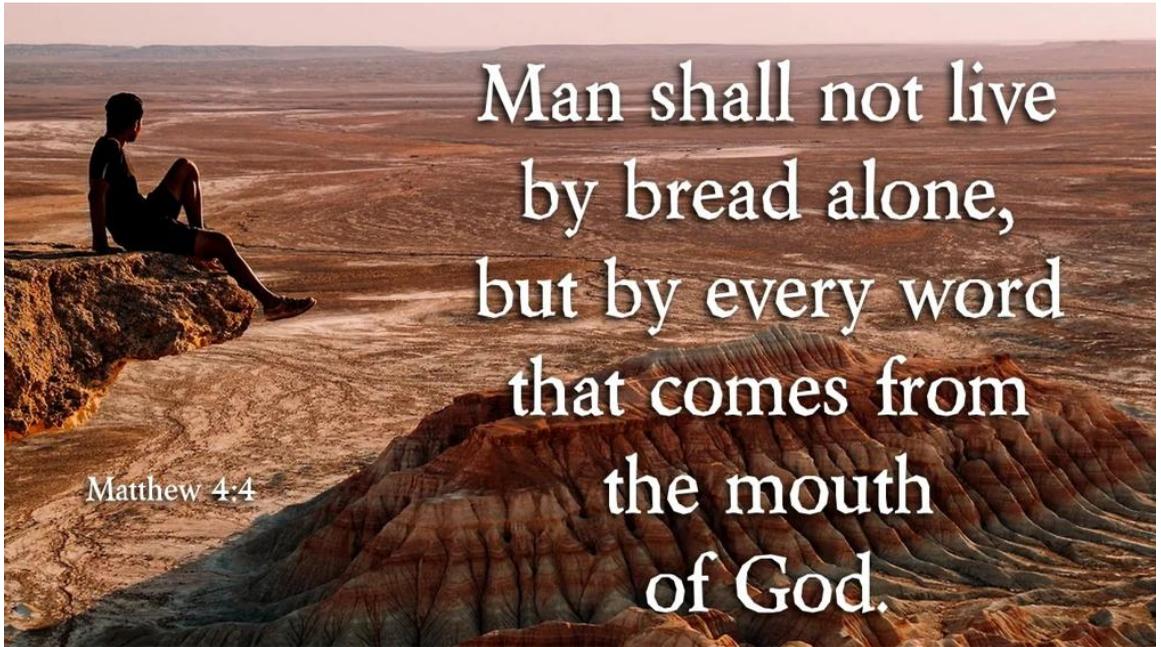


First Sunday in Lent
February 22, 2026 10:30 AM



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658
Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: gracenalcnwton@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: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P: God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **C: Amen.**

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:

O Lord God, we are surrounded by temptation and all that would draw us away from you. Save us from the power of sin and death and bring us to the life that comes to us through the death and resurrection of Christ 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 3: 1-21

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹²The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her

offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”¹⁶To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”¹⁷And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”²⁰The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

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

PSALM 32: 1-7

¹Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

²Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

⁶Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;

surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

SECOND READING: Romans 5: 12-19

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass

brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

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

The congregation is invited to stand.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" LBW 230

***GOSPEL: Matthew 4: 1-11**

P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

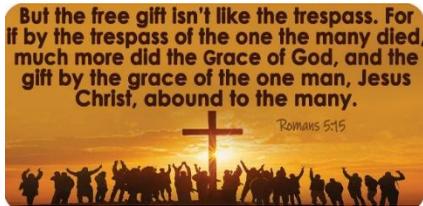
¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

P: The Gospel of the Lord. C: **Praise to you, O Christ!**

The congregation may be seated.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON



“Christ Empowers Our Perseverance in Life’s Temptations, Trials, and Tests!”

Pastor Doug Hefner

***HYMN OF THE DAY:** **“O Lord, throughout These Forty Days”** **LBW 99**

Tune: St. Anne

***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.**

Worshippers 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

* 

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: God our provider in the wilderness, C: you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the true bread from heaven. Amen.

* **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

LBW PG. 68

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 our thanks and praise.

* **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

☐ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace.

The congregation is invited to stand.

*** COMMUNION BLESSING AND PRAYER**

P: Merciful God, we give you thanks for nourishing our faith with Jesus, the Bread of Life. As we continue our Lenten journey through these forty days, we ask that You would renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. **C: 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**

“Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing”

LBW 259

***DISMISSAL**

P: As we walk with Jesus on this Lenten Pilgrimage, let us take up our cross and follow Jesus as proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. Go in peace and serve the Lord!

C: **Thanks be to God.**



In the Grace Church Family:

Jeffrey Bivens, Rick & Cindy Bivens, Glenda Childers, Pat Dietz, Allen and Kay Hatchett, Larry Heavner, Lorene Heavner, Chris Jarrett, Larry & Brenda Jarrett, Martha Johnson, Faye Lane, Harvey Leatherman, Phil & Malinda Leatherman, Tim Leatherman, Betty Matheson, Joe

Momier, Jane Moss, Christine Norman, Michael Norman, Tricia and Dan Panek, Mike, Debi & Stephen Pisko, Alice Parris, 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)

Friends and Relatives in our Prayers: Pray for Peace in Israel and the World, New Covenant Lutheran Mission Church, family of Carl Beam, Harold Buff, Ashlee Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Sonya Elliott & family (car accident, recovering at home now), Anne Poovey, family of Ken Propst, Randy & Rita Neill, Jeff Richards (Steven Beaver's cousin), Anita Sabino, and Scott Speagle. 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.

HAPPY FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY TO:

February 4 – Tricia Panek February 12 – Gabby Bare

February 25 – Carolyn Whisnant

COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK

Today: First Sunday in Lent

9:30am – Sunday School

10:30am - Worship Celebration

Wednesday: 6:30pm – Lenten Vespers Service w/ Bible Study

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mon, March 9, VBS Meeting at Zion Lutheran at 5:30pm

Sun, March 15, Ministry Teams Breakfast Workshop at 9:15am

Sun, March 29, Palm Sunday, Sunday of the Passion

Thur, April 2, Maundy Thursday and **Fri, April 3,** Good Friday

Sun, April 5, Easter with Sunrise Service, Breakfast, Main Service at 10:30am

GIVING AND ATTENDANCE FOR LAST SUNDAY

| Date | Offering | | Attendance | |
|-----------|----------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| | Total Receipts | General Fund | Worship | Sunday School |
| 2/15/2026 | \$ 3,062.20 | \$ 1,860.00 | 45 | 6 |

EASTER LILIES



Orders for Easter lilies will be taken today through Sunday, March 8. Order forms and special envelopes can be found in the Narthex. Please use the special envelope for your order and any other offering you may make on the Sunday that you place your order. The cost is \$13.00 per lily. The flowers may be taken after the 10:30 am Worship service on Easter Sunday.

SAVE THE DATES

Grace partners with 5 other local churches for a community *Vacation Bible School*. The host church this year is Zion Lutheran Church and the date is **Sunday, May 31 – Thursday, June 4**. They will announce the theme soon and we will need adult volunteers to help. The VBS is not just for children/youth; there is an adult class offered as well. Grace will be hosting the *Carolina's Mission District Solid Rock Day Camp* again this year. The dates are **Monday, June 15 – Friday, June 19**. The camp is for children/youth 4K- 5th grade. We will have college age counselors and a seminarian to lead the camp. The hours are 9 am - 4 pm Monday-Thursday, 9 am- 12 noon on Friday The week will include Bible study, singing, games, crafts, skits, and lots of fun! Cost is only \$100 for a full week of growing in the faith and lots of fun! Grace will be providing help with the cost for any members that want to attend.

GRACE MINISTRY TEAMS

Thank you for signing up for our Ministry Teams! Please see the bulletin insert for a draft roster. If you find any errors, please let us know. The Ministry Teams will meet on 3/15 at 9:15 in the Fellowship Hall prior to worship. Coffee, juice, and Danishes will be served at this working meeting.

1. Worship/Fellowship Ministry Team – Plans for worship needs (ushers, lectors, greeters, altar guild, etc); Christian Education including Sunday School, Small Groups,

Confirmation, and VBS; Youth Ministry – planning ministry to help youth grow in the faith and live out their faith. Help to coordinate Fellowship event and meals.

2. Discipleship Ministry Team Encourages all member of the church to be disciples of the Lord Jesus, Helps the church to connect with our community to introduce people to Jesus, Coordinates our mission outreach like Ashure, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

3. Stewardship Finance Ministry Team Coordinates all aspects of the church’s finances, Establishes a budget to guide ministry financing, encourages all of Grace’s members to be good stewards of God’s blessings.

4. Stewardship Property Ministry Team Oversees all aspects of indoor and outdoor property. Grace is blessed with a beautiful campus that needs to be maintained to meet our ministry and mission needs.

Introducing Jesus: Son of God, Messiah, Lord, and Savior of the World!

During Sunday School (9:15AM), Midweek Lent Service (6:30PM), and Holy Week, Pastor Doug will present video clips focusing on Jesus from the amazing, powerful, inspirational series called *The Chosen*. Each gathering will have prayers, some singing/praising, Scripture reading, and a short dramatic video clip highlighting our Scripture for that gathering. We will take some time to reflect together on the Scripture and video clip. This is for all ages! Some have termed a gathering like this as *Intergenerational*. In other words, bring your whole family! (especially children and youth!) There will be 12 studies! We will gather at 9:15am on Sunday mornings 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, 3/22, and 3/29. At 6:30pm on Wednesdays 2/25, 3/4, 3/11, 3/18, 3/25. And on Maundy Thursday, 4/2 at 6:30pm and Good Friday, 6:30pm. Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings will be held in the Fellowship Hall. Light refreshments will be provided. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday will be held in the Sanctuary as part of our worship service on these days. Please note that on 3/15 we will gather at 9:15am for Ministry Team Sunday. All four ministry teams will meet that morning. Coffee and a light breakfast will be provided.

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 – Cindy Bivens

Communion Assistants – Tina Hefner & Nicky Jarrett

Ushers – Jacob Jarrett & Jack Wilfong

Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Tim Eckard

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

First Sunday in Lent – February 22, 2026

“¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.”

- Romans 5:12-13, 15 -

During the summer of 1874, swarms of Rocky Mountain locusts invaded the Great Plains in the United States and Canada. Often referred to as the Locust Plague of 1874, or the Grasshopper Plague of 1874, the locusts swarmed over an estimated 2,000,000 square miles (5,200,000 km²) and caused millions of dollars' worth of damage. Residents described swarms so thick that they covered the sun for up to six hours.

Compared to previous infestations in the region, the 1874 plague was significantly more damaging. A record drought in the Midwest and Great Plains had arrived, which caused the grasshoppers (estimated at 120 billion to 12.5 trillion) to not only thrive but also to swarm when local vegetation was ruined. The arriving locusts would pile up to over a foot high and ate crops, trees, leaves, grass, wool off sheep, harnesses on horses, paint from wagons, even the handles on pitchforks.

The locusts would eat for several days from fields and trees and in some instances also ate food inside the farmers' homes before they moved on. Carpets and clothes were damaged by the locusts in the process. The locust excrement and carcasses polluted ponds and streams. Train tracks "slick with grasshopper guts" caused trains to lose traction, according to the book *It Happened in Nebraska*. The sight must have been ghastly, and it's difficult to imagine for those of us that did not experience the horror.

However, the Grasshopper Plague serves as a good metaphor for Paul's description of sin from Romans, chapter 5. Sin leads to more sin, which leads to more sin. It infests on the human race. It spreads quickly like a plague. It can start off slowly and quietly; it often does. But then, before you know it, sin is widespread and menacing, affecting both the guilty and innocent alike. Really, we are all guilty because we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But the good news is Jesus Christ is the antidote to the plague of sin. Through his blood shed on the cross, we have been forgiven, and by His grace, we are set free from the plague of sin and given new life in Him.

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