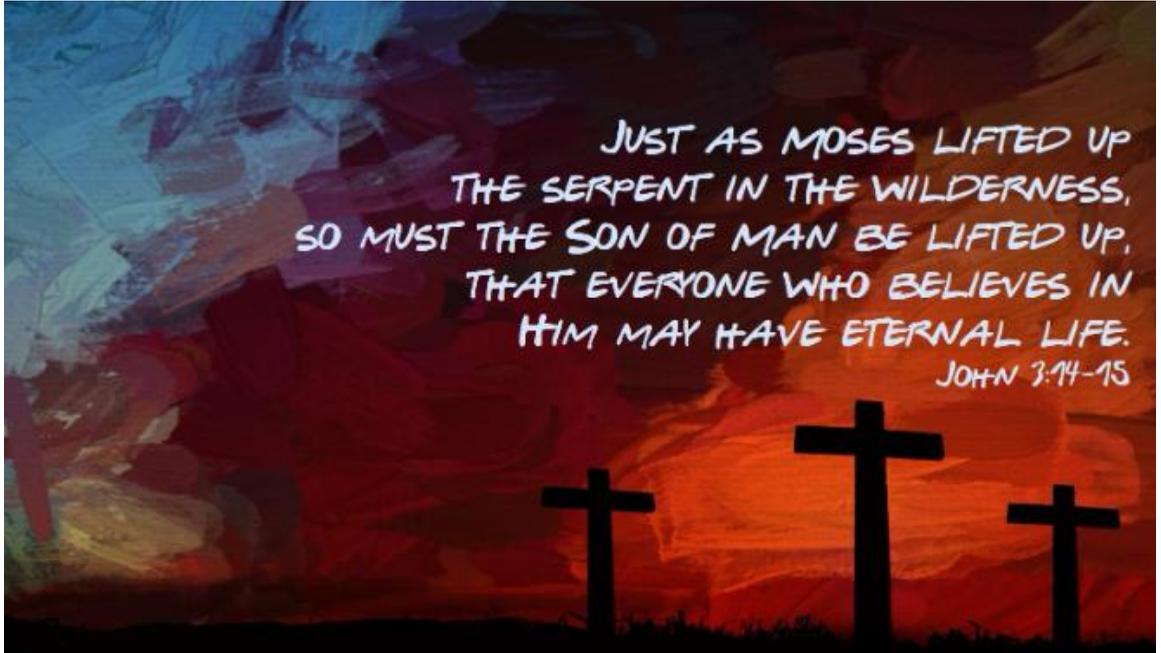


# Second Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2026 10:30 AM



## Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church



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4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway, Newton, North Carolina 28658

Church Office: (704) 462-1035 email: [gracenalnewton@aol.com](mailto:gracenalnewton@aol.com)

[www.gracelutheran-newton.org](http://www.gracelutheran-newton.org)

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

Almighty and everlasting God, through your Son’s passion you brought your reign of righteousness and peace into the human heart. Draw us to you through Jesus’ cross and keep us faithful to your reign until he comes again; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*The congregation may be seated.*

**FIRST READING: Numbers 21: 4-9**

<sup>4</sup>From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” <sup>6</sup>Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup>And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze<sup>[c]</sup> serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

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

**PSALM 121**

<sup>1</sup>I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

**<sup>2</sup>My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**

<sup>3</sup>He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

**<sup>4</sup>Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

<sup>5</sup>The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

**<sup>6</sup>The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

<sup>7</sup>The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

**<sup>8</sup>The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.**

**SECOND READING: 1 John 4: 1-12**

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

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

*The congregation is invited to stand.*

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: “Return to the Lord Your God”**

**LBW 63**

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and  
mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in  
stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

## **\*GOSPEL: John 3: 1-17**

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

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

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

*The congregation may be seated.*

## **CHILDREN’S MESSAGE**



## **SERMON**

***“God So Loved the World That He Gave His Only Son”***

***Pastor Doug Hefner***

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” LBW 479**

**\*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**

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: Faithful God of New Beginnings, in the shadows of our questions and the uncertainty of our understanding, you meet us with grace, not condemnation. As Nicodemus discovered, your love is not earned but freely given. Receive now these gifts we offer— signs of our belief, our hope, and our gratitude. Use them to share your transforming love with a world still searching in the dark. In the name of your Son, given in love, we pray. **C: 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**

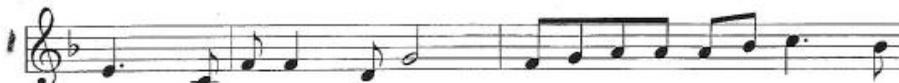
**Lamb of God**



☐ 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: Tender and merciful God, at your feast, you fed us who brought nothing, turning our emptiness to joy. Filled with your abundant grace and love, send us now to be ministers of reconciliation, mending broken hearts, working for justice, and striving for peace among all people, in the name of Jesus Christ. **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**

**“God Loved the World”**

**LBW 292**

*Alt. Tune: Duke Street*

**\*DISMISSAL**

P: Let us look in faith to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who was lifted up on the cross for our salvation so that all who believe in Him may have abundant and eternal life. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

**C: Thanks be to God.**



**In the Grace Church Family:**

Jeffry 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, Ashlee Bumgardner, Clinton Childers, Evelyn Childers, Holly Groce, Anne Poovey, Randy & Rita Neill, 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 MARCH BIRTHDAY TO:**

Jacob Jarrett – March 4                      Christine Norman – March 5  
 Danny Robertson – March 12        Malinda Leatherman – March 22  
 Belinda Wilfong – March 24

**COMING UP AT GRACE THIS WEEK**

**Today: Second Sunday in Lent**

9:15am – Sunday School                      10:30am - Worship Celebration

**Wednesday:**

12:00pm – Fred T. Foard Seniors Luncheon at Ebenezer UMC, Vale  
 6:30pm – Lenten Vespers Service w/ Bible Study in Fellowship Hall

**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
2/22/2026	\$ 2,019	\$ 1,970.00	49	17

**EASTER LILIES – 2 SUNDAYS REMAIN TO PLACE ORDERS**



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- 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **MARCH NEWSLETTERS AVAILABLE TODAY**

Please pick up your March newsletter and calendar in the Narthex.

## **RESURRECTION CELEBRATION AND EASTER EGG HUNT**

Last year we offered a gathering for families with children and youth to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. We had games, prizes, food and an Easter egg hunt. This seems like a good way to connect with our community. Are there volunteers who would like to help Pastor Doug put this together? And what would be a good date to offer this event?

*Ministers of Grace – All the People of Grace*  
*Pastor – Reverend Doug Hefner      Board President – Tim Eckard*  
*Lector – Tim Eckard      Youth Leader – Stormy Shull*  
*Altar Preparation – Belinda Wilfong & Frankie Crouse*  
*Communion Assistants – Kim Parker & Shelly Scronce*  
*Ushers – David Wilfong and Jeff Scronce*  
*Offering Counters – Todd Childers & Jason Yoder*

# Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Second Sunday in Lent – March 1, 2026

*“I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?  
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”*

- Psalm 121:1-2 -

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills.* Imagine you are travelling through ancient Israel. You and your fellow travelers stop to make camp because it will be dark soon. You’re in a wilderness, like the Wild West of the U. S. Crime isn’t foreign. Thieves roam the hills; wild animals wander nearby, ready to attack. No law enforcement exists, so you’re left to fend for your loved ones and yourself on your own. It can be dangerous and frightening, even to the most experienced traveler.

But as you look up toward the hills, you’re reminded that you’re not alone. The rolling hills surround you, like a loving parent gathers you into his or her arms. The hills remind you that God is there, guarding you, loving you. Where does your help come from? It comes from Him! The One who made heaven and earth.

Day in and day out, year after year, each of us is faced with the wilderness of this world. Maybe it’s the loss of a loved one. Maybe we’re dealing with the hatred of others. Maybe it’s our own fault, and we’ve sinned against another, making life difficult for ourselves and others. Maybe we or a loved one is suffering from difficult health conditions. The circumstances of this life on earth can cause us to lose hope. We find ourselves wondering if life will ever be worth living again, if life will have any value or joy.

“Don’t give up!” It’s easier said than done. But having faith in Jesus makes a huge difference in how we can endure such circumstances. True, we won’t be without pain. The world is full of sin, so pain free is impossible this side of heaven. However, living in faith means we do have hope. We don’t have to be afraid because we can trust Jesus and his promises. We can remember that Jesus gave his life for us on one of those hills: the hill of Calvary. And the story doesn’t end there. Three days later, God raised his son from the grave to overcome sin, death, and the devil himself.

So, I encourage you to lift your eyes to the hills and remember that God conquered all through death and resurrection of his only son Jesus Christ. And in doing so, God has made us victors in Christ. He has put everything right in Christ. “The LORD is your keeper... The LORD will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore” (Psalm 121:5a, 7-8).

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