

# Grace Notes



Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton, NC

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9:15am Sunday School 10:30am Worship Service with Communion

Volume 229, Number 4

APRIL 2026

## ***“Easter Changes Everything...Including You and Me!”***

*An Easter Message from Pastor Doug Hefner*

Colossians 2:15 – ***“With the cross, God won the victory”;***

1 Cor. 15:57 The Message – ***“But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three – sin, guilt, death – are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!”***

***1 Corinthians 15:20-22, 51-58*** <sup>20</sup>*But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.* <sup>21</sup>*For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being;* <sup>22</sup>*for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.* <sup>51</sup>*Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed,* <sup>52</sup>*in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.* <sup>53</sup>*For this perishable body must put on imperishability and this mortal body must put on immortality.* <sup>54</sup>*When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”* <sup>55</sup>*“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”* <sup>56</sup>*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* <sup>57</sup>***But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*** <sup>58</sup>***Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.***

During difficult times, we wonder what God can do to help us find healing and new life. The cross and the empty tomb remind us that God indeed can take the worst day and turn it into our most victorious day. God became flesh in Jesus and dwelt among us. For 33 years Jesus experienced human life and shared with us the divine love and will of God. And yet, sinful humanity crucified our Lord on a cross which had to be one of the most cruel and painful ways one could die. That day was so dark that even the sun refused to shine... there was darkness throughout the land as the Son of God suffered and

died for us. During Lent we journeyed with our Lord and experienced His love and sacrifice as He went to the cross for us. We have heard Jesus' call to pick up our cross and follow Him. And this wondrous love has moved and empowered us to give of ourselves and love sacrificially as Jesus loves us.

But our awesome **God turned the world's most tragic day into the world's most triumphant day** as God raised Jesus from the dead. We would have to say that the first Easter is the world's most triumphant day as our Lord defeated sin, death, and the devil. We celebrate the victory of Christ at Easter; indeed we celebrate this victory each and every day! Christ meets us on the road as He did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and opens our hearts, minds, and eyes to see His love and His victory at work in our lives. And we, like them, have our hearts burn within us with the love of God and become witnesses who share the good news of our victory in Christ.

***Now if God can turn the world's most tragic day into the world's most triumphant day, we can certainly trust Him with our lives and the things that we struggle with in this world.*** No matter how difficult our current circumstance is or how dark things may look, trust God to bring you new life, triumph, and victory through it all! With such a faith we may serve boldly in the world today knowing that God will be with us and see us through with His grace, strength, love, and peace Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!

Easter is full of joy and celebration for we are set free, forgiven, reconciled with God and one another, made alive in Christ, and promised new life here and eternal life with God. We can confidently say, ***"Easter Changes Everything!"*** St. Paul in the passage above reminds us of the wonderful change that Christ's victory at Easter made possible for the world, for you and me. He specifically tells us what Jesus' death and resurrection accomplishes for us (please read all of 1 Corinthians 15 which is considered one of the most amazing chapters in the Bible). As we put our faith in our risen Lord we can ***"be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."***

Here is a story of people who put their faith in the risen Lord when things looked hopeless. The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, surrounded by the enemy, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church. The pastor rose and said, ***'Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us.'*** The council accepted his plan and the **church bells rang out in faith and trust in God to celebrate the Goodnews of Easter.** The enemy, hearing the sudden peal of the bell,

concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left. Indeed, Easter changes everything!

**“Easter Changes Everything!”** will be my sermon theme as we journey together through the glorious season of Easter. We will reflect on the amazing stories of our risen Lord’s encounter with the disciples/Church. We will see how the risen Lord forever changed them and gave them new life. The risen Lord gave them new faith, assurance of forgiveness and salvation, renewed peace, boldness to proclaim the good news, and courage to live out their faith to bring about the transformation of the world!

I encourage you to read the Scriptures for each upcoming Sunday and be transformed by the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Just as the early disciples and the early Church were forever changed and sent into the world to proclaim the life-changing gospel, we today are sent forth to live out our faith and to proclaim in word and deed the good news. St. Paul wrote, *“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”* Indeed our labor/work which is our calling and ministry is not in vain, for if it is done in Christ and for Christ, it will not only change us but the whole world! Therefore, my beloved friends in Christ, let us joyfully celebrate that we serve the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who gave His life for the world and overcame sin and death by rising again. Let us never forget that **“Easter Changes Everything!”** And like the early Church, let us boldly, faithfully, lovingly, and courageously take the life-changing gospel of Christ into all the world! Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

*Changed forever in Christ, Pastor Doug*

## **“Easter Changes Everything: Victory in Jesus’ Death and Resurrection”**

*9:15am Sunday School for all ages; 10:30am Worship Service with Communion*  
**April 5, 2026, Easter Sunday-The Resurrection of Our Lord! Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed! “Easter Changes Everything”** Services on this day will include a Sunrise Service with Communion at 7am starting in the Grace Memorial Garden and moving to Grace Union. All are invited to share in a Easter Breakfast 8am (Fellowship Hall), Sunday School 9:15 am, and Traditional Easter Service with Holy Communion at 10:30am. For Sunrise I will focus on John 20:1-18 and for the 10:30am service I will focus on the rest of that chapter, John 20:19-31. Other texts include 1 Corinthians 15, Mark 16, Matthew 28, Luke 24 Come and worship on the most amazing day in the life of the Church as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord. Invite your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers!

**April 12, 2026 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun of Easter: “Easter Changes Everything: *Our Risen Lord Walks with Us to Open Our Eyes and Hearts to His Resurrection Life*”,** Luke 24:13-35 Our gospel is the beautiful story of the Road to Emmaus. Two disciples who were discouraged and hopeless made the long walk back home. Then they are met by a stranger who is Jesus who listens to their grief and shows them God’s love and victory in Him through the Scripture. Later that evening, in the breaking of the bread, they see the risen Lord as their eyes are opened and they go back to share with the disciples that they had seen the Lord!

**April 19, 2026 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun of Easter “Breakfast of Champions”** John 21:1-17 After being sent out with the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples end up returning to the familiar and comfortable: fishing. However, they caught nothing all through the night. In the morning a stranger tells them to try the other side of the boat. They listen to his advice and catch a net-full of fish. They realize that it is Jesus and when they come ashore, Jesus has breakfast ready for them. Jesus restores Peter by asking him 3 times, “Do you love me?”

**April 26, 2026 4<sup>th</sup> Sun of Easter: “The *Good Shepherd and His Abundant Life*”** John 10:11-18 The gospel message for the day is from *John 10*, where Jesus reminds us that he is the Good Shepherd, who gathers us into His family and watches over and cares for us so that we might have “life and have it abundantly.”

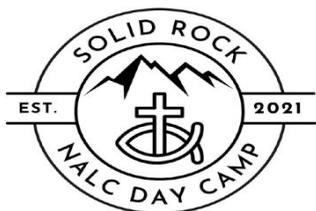
**Upcoming Dates:**

Fri/Sat May 1&2: Carolina’s Mission District Convocation in Salisbury, NC.  
Sunday, May 3 Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Sunday, May 10, Sixth Sunday of Easter, Mother’s Day, Gifts for Mothers  
Sunday, May 18, Seventh Sunday of Easter / Celebration of the Ascension of Our Lord  
Sunday, May 24, The Day of Pentecost, We will honor our veterans who have died in serving our nation (Memorial Day is Monday, May 25)  
Sunday, May 31 Holy Trinity Sunday  
Sunday, May 31 – Thursday, June 4 Illumination Station VBS (see announcement)  
Sunday, June 7 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun aft Pentecost  
Sunday, June 14, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun aft Pentecost (evening social to welcome Day Campers)  
Mon-Friday, June 15-19, Solid Rock Day Camp Hosted by Grace, 9am-4pm  
Sunday, June 21, 4<sup>th</sup> Sun aft Pentecost, Father’s Day, Gifts for Fathers

### Wednesday Night Vespers/Bible Study 6:30PM

We will not have Wednesday night service the week after Easter (April 8). We will meet on April 15, 22, and 29. In 45 minutes we enjoy praise and prayer as well as a Bible Study. We will begin a Bible Study on the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

Sunday School For April (9:15AM in Adult Class Upstairs at Sanctuary) We will continue using The Story Bible Study as we pick up with the Good News of Jesus' resurrection on April 5.



Calling all children grades 4K- 5<sup>th</sup> grade....  
Day Camp is coming your way! Hosted by:  
Grace Lutheran Church and the Carolinas  
Mission Region Day Camp Team and  
Counselors. When: The week of **Monday,  
June 15 – Friday, June 19.** 9 am - 4 pm  
Monday-Thursday, 9 am- 12 noon 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! Ask your home church to help sponsor  
you! Don't let cost get in the way. We can find

scholarships somewhere if you are interested! Last year we had about 30 youth who really enjoyed the fun and inspirational experience of day camp. See Pastor Doug if you would like to attend or if you would like to help volunteer.

### **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR APRIL**

❖ Lector	Todd Childers
❖ Ushers	Allen Biggerstaff & Jack Parris
❖ Communion Assistants	Tina Hefner & Nicky Jarrett
❖ Altar Preparation	Cindy Bivens & Nicky Jarrett
❖ Offering Tabulators	Todd Childers & Jeff Scronce

*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 APRIL

<b>4/5 – Grace Church</b>	<b>4/12 – Alan &amp; Stormy Shull</b>
<b>4/19 – Kim Parker</b>	<b>4/22 – Susan Setzer</b>



If you wish to place flowers on a given Sunday, please list your name on the chart in the narthex. 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.

*You are responsible for ordering the flowers from a florist of your choice. If you would like your flowers to be delivered, Kathy's Flowers & Gifts (704-462-1162) in Vale will deliver to our sanctuary at no extra cost.*

*Flowers do not have to be ordered from a florist. Live flowers from a garden center, grocery store, or from your own garden are beautiful also.*

### **ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR MARCH**

	<b>2/22/26</b>	<b>3/1/26</b>	<b>3/8/26</b>	<b>3/15/26</b>	<b>3/22/26</b>
<b>Sunday School</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Worship</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>General Fund Offerings</b>	<b>\$1,970</b>	<b>\$3,196</b>	<b>\$2,240</b>	<b>\$1,650</b>	<b>\$5,385</b>

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 noon at Sardis Lutheran Church. All are invited!

**THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST** will be held on Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup> 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, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.

**THE GRACE PRAYER LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall. All are invited!

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of April is canned or dried beans. We are doing great things at Grace in helping feed the hungry in our own community. Let's try to donate 2,000 pounds in 2026! That would be around 170 pounds per month. We can do it! Let's come together to help reach this goal!

### **EASTER SUNDAY SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**Sunday, April 5, 2026**

Sunrise Service at 7:00am (Union Church)

Breakfast at 8:00am

Sunday School at 9:15am

Main Service at 10:30am



SHINING A LIGHT ON  
WHO JESUS REALLY IS

# ILLUMINATION STATION

JOHN 8:12

**Vacation Bible School 2026**

Join us for the brightest week of the summer! At Illumination Station, you will explore how light brightens, illuminates, reflects, and reveals while discovering that Jesus is the Light of the World. Through Bible study, music, crafts, and recreation, you will learn that Jesus is the perfect, proven, and powerful Son of God.

*Light up your summer and shine a light on Jesus!*

**For All Ages: Preschoolers, Kids, Teenagers & Adults!**

 Place:

**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
1911 Zion Church Rd, Hickory, NC

 Date & Time:

**Sunday, 5/31 – Thursday, 6/4**  
**5:30pm – 8:30pm**  
(Dinner from 5:30-6:00pm)

Register Here:



**[zionhickory.org/vbs-2026](https://zionhickory.org/vbs-2026)**