

# 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

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JULY 2026

*“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!” Psalm 33:12*

## A Message from Pastor Doug Hefner

When we think of July, we automatically think of our nation’s birthday (July 4, 1776) and the celebration of Independence Day. This year we will celebrate another important birthday milestone for our nation: **250 Years!** I can still remember celebrating our 200<sup>th</sup> birthday 50 years ago as an 11 year old, my granddaughter’s age! As a seasoned adult and Christian, I see things much differently today than I did 50 years ago. Our country’s ancestors had a vision for a new nation and a new way of life and government as they wrote the Declaration of Independence, declaring our nation’s independence from England. In the Declaration of Independence we read these words, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”* Let us give thanks to God for the freedoms we enjoy as a nation and remember the people who sacrificed so much for that to be possible.

Someone has said that *“the temptation is to enjoy the fruits of citizenship without tending the tree of liberty.”* We are called to tend the tree of liberty by acts of service and sacrifice in our own generation; to keep this vision alive and moving forward. This vision of America is always in the process of coming into greater fulfillment or moving away from its ideals. There have been periods in our history when we can say we lived up to this grand vision (WW2) and times when we have miserably failed (slavery, the Civil War, and

its ongoing aftermath). In God's Kingdom the same is also true. On this side of heaven, we will never experience the fullness or completion of God's Kingdom (what we call the already but not yet here). One day Christ will bring the Kingdom in all of its fullness. Until then we must do the same thing as God's people as we live out the vision that God has given us in His Word and through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest freedom we know is the freedom that has been given to us in Christ Jesus. Jesus said in John 8: ***"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free... So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."*** In John 8 Jesus reminds us that we are all slaves to sin and because of that sin, we are separated from God and one another. Jesus died for us on the cross and rose again so that we might be forgiven and welcomed into the body of Christ, the Church. Jesus reminds us that we are to continue in God's Word so that we will know the truth of our sinful situation and what God did for us in Christ to bring us reconciliation and freedom. The truth of God's love for us in Christ sets us free from sin, death and the devil. To be faithful disciples of Jesus we are to continue in His Word.

We are set free to glorify God, to love, serve and worship God, and love our neighbor as ourselves. St. Paul writes in ***Galatians 5:1, 13 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. <sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*** St. Paul reminds us that those who are free in Christ become His servants by serving others. We are called to use our God-given freedom to make a difference in the world. Indeed, we love the freedoms God has granted to us, but let us also live in those freedoms as we follow our Lord and serve Him as we love and serve others in His name. Let us proclaim the freedom Christ has won for all people and let us not use our freedom for our own self-indulgence and sinful selfishness. Whenever we are exercising our "freedoms" we must always ask ourselves, "As I do this am I living up to God's call to love and to care for my neighbor as myself?" As a redeemed child of God we are called to love our neighbor and to live our lives accordingly.

As we gather to remember and celebrate our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday and the freedoms that we enjoy in America, let us first of all remember and give thanks to God for our true freedom in Christ. We are forgiven in Christ and we are set free in love to live in Christ's

love and to love others in Christ's name. Let us celebrate and give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy as God's people and as Americans. May we not forget that we are called to live in those same freedoms and serve others in Jesus' name. The best way to live out our freedoms as Americans is to live in the freedom of Christ, it's precious promises and it's challenging call to earthly and heavenly citizenship!

God's Peace be with you all, *In Christ's Service, Pastor Doug Hefner*

### **Worship Themes and Scripture for July 2026**

***9:15 AM Sunday School – Using series filmed in Holy Lands, “That the World May Know”***

***10:30am Worship service with Holy Communion***

### **July 5, 2026 5th Sun after Pentecost Special Independence Day Service.:**

**Deuteronomy 8, Psalm 33; Galatians 5:1,13-22; John 8:31-38** Psalm 33:12 has an important message as we celebrate the birth of our nation: ***“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!” Psalm 33:12*** In Galatians 5, St. Paul reminds of the gift of freedom that we have in Christ and how we should exercise this amazing gift from God, for example, not for our self-indulgence but in love for the sake of serving and blessing others in Jesus' name. St. Paul's words in Galatians were most likely inspired by the words of Jesus in John 8: If you are a sinner, then you are a slave to sin. However, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! Jesus is the only one that can release us from the bondage to sin and death. We will give thanks to God for our country and the freedoms and blessings we enjoy as Americans but more importantly, we celebrate our freedom as God's people in Christ. We will sing traditional national hymns as well as honor our service men and women.

### **July 12, 2026 7th Sun after Pentecost: Isaiah 55:10-13; Psalm 65: [1-8] 9-13; Romans**

**8:12-17; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** Did you plant a garden this summer? Isn't it frustrating when something happens to your crop? Perhaps the weeds got out of control, or animals damaged the plant and/or fruit, or perhaps the soil wasn't as prepared as you had hoped. On the other hand, if you are seeing growth and enjoying the fruit, you are rejoicing at the power of the seed and what it can do if planted in the right soil. In the Parable of the Seed and the Soils Jesus talks about how the Word sown in the human heart can produce abundant fruit. But beware Jesus says, for the devil, cares of the world, shallowness, material riches, and tribulation can impact the Word's growth in our lives and the harvest

that comes from it.

**July 19, 2026 8th Sun after Pentecost: Isaiah 44:6-8; Psalm 119:57-64; Romans 8:18-27; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** This week we hear Jesus' Parable of the Wheat and Weeds. God is sowing the good seed of the Word, which by grace results in the faithful people of God. However, the enemy is sowing weeds of destruction, which result in sons and daughters of the evil one. The disciples and we wonder what we can do about evil in the world today. Should we pull the weeds? What if we make a mistake or if by pulling a weed, we destroy the wheat? Jesus calls us to trust Him in that at the end of the age he will separate good from evil and bring forth justice/restoration. Jesus says, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

**July 26, 2026 9th Sun after Pentecost: Deuteronomy 7:6-9; Psalm 125; Romans 8:28-39; Matthew 13:44-52** We continue this Sunday with two parables about treasure compared to the kingdom of God: buried treasure and pearl of great value. In both cases, the treasure hunter is willing to give up everything else for the blessing of having the treasure. Indeed the Gospel, the good news of God's love in Christ, is indeed our greatest treasure, that shapes and blesses our lives here and eternally. In Deut. 7 Moses reminds the people that they have been chosen to be a people for God's treasured possession. In other words, we are God's treasure and God sent Jesus to find and save the treasure by giving up everything, even His own life, to redeem and restore us!

### **Right Now Media**

Don't forget to take advantage of the great Bible Studies and other Christian Resources on this incredible website. While we are not able to have Sunday School or Bible Study together right now, it is a great way to continue growing in your faith for the whole family (something for all ages).

### **WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR JULY**

❖ Lector	Tim Eckard
❖ Ushers	Jeff Scronce & Jack Wilfong
❖ Communion Assistants	Sheila Drum & Betty Wilfong
❖ Altar Preparation	Betty Wilfong
❖ Offering Tabulators	Todd Childers & Jason Yoder

*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 JULY**

**JULY 5** Jeff Scronce

**JULY 12** Frankie Crouse

**JULY 19 OPEN**

**JULY 26** Todd Childers

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 JUNE**

	<b>5/31/26</b>	<b>6/7/26</b>	<b>6/14/26</b>	<b>6/21/26</b>
<b>Sunday School</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Worship</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>General Fund Offerings</b>	<b>\$1,920</b>	<b>\$3,025</b>	<b>\$1,796</b>	<b>\$3,673</b>

**Upcoming Dates:**

- +Sun., July 5 – Service of Thanksgiving to God for America’s 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday, 10:30am
- +Sun., Aug. 23, Back to School Service 10:30am, Blessing of Backpacks, Picnic
- + Sun., Sept. 13 Grandparents Sunday, 10:30am – Gift/Prayers/Blessing for Grandparents

- + Sun, Sept 20 Homecoming Worship Service followed by Covered Dish Luncheon in Shelter
- +Sun., Oct. 4 Food for the Poor Sunday 10:30am; Catawba Co. Walk for Hunger 3pm
- + Sun., Oct. 11 4pm Blessing of the Animals Service at Grace Outdoor Shelter
- + October Possible Bazaar (Yard sale) with Octoberfest foods as a fundraiser for hunger.
- + Sun, Oct. 25 Reformation Sunday Service at 10:30am
- + Sat., Oct. 31, Grace Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat 5pm-7pm
- + Sunday, Nov. 1, 10:30am All Saints' Day Service, Worshippers light a candle in remembrance of a loved one in heaven.
- + Nov. 22 Christ the King Sunday 10:30am, Last Sunday in Church Year
- +Wed, Nov. 25 Community Thanksgiving Service 6pm Dinner, 7pm Worship
- + Nov. 29 Advent Season 11/29-12/24 begins with First Sunday of Advent.
- +Sat., Dec. 6 – Breakfast with Santa, Pancakes with fixings, Crafts, Music, Storytime
- +Thur., Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight and Holy Communion Service 5pm
- +Sun., Jan. 3, 2027 New Year's Sunday Service, 10:30am

**FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON** will be held on Wednesday, July 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 noon at Wesley Chapel UMC. All are invited!

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

**ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK** for the month of July is snacks for kids. We are doing great things at Grace in helping feed the hungry in our own community. Year-to-date the disciples of Grace have donated 461 pounds of food to Ashure in addition to the giving for our Blessing Box. Moving forward, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month will be designated as Ashure Sunday. We would like to collect any food donations to help us catch up with our giving at Ashure.

**CATAWBA COUNTY HUNGER WALK**

Ashure Ministry, Hickory Soup Kitchen, and The Corner Table are proud to come together to host the 2026 Catawba County Hunger Walk!

We invite you to join us for this meaningful community event dedicated to fighting hunger right here in Catawba County. Proceeds from this year's walk will support all three organizations as we work together to provide food, hope, and dignity to our neighbors facing food insecurity.

The Hunger Walk is more than just a fundraiser—it's a powerful way to bring our community together while raising awareness about the ongoing challenge of hunger in our area.

We humbly ask for your support. Every dollar raised will be divided equally among Ashure Ministry, Hickory Soup Kitchen, and The Corner Table, and every dollar goes directly toward helping feed those who need it most.

Thank you for standing with us in this shared mission of compassion and care. Together, we can take meaningful steps toward ending hunger in Catawba County.

All walkers who register and raise a minimum of \$25 before August 30th will receive a walk t-shirt. David and Belinda Wilfong are our church team captains. Please reach out to David and Belinda if you have any questions.

## **FOOD FOR THE POOR SUNDAY IS OCTOBER 4, 2026**



Our purpose is to bring urgent relief to vulnerable families affected by poverty. We designed our assistance programs to empower our beneficiaries to become self-sufficient and ultimately inspire them to

build strong communities so their members can help each other. We constantly seek simple, efficient strategies to fight hunger and poverty without adversely impacting our aid recipients or their country. While our charity organization was founded on the religious principle that it is our moral duty to clothe and feed the poor (Matthew 25:40), Food For The Poor is neutral, impartial, apolitical, and encompasses all religions and beliefs. FFTP holds preserving human dignity and caring for those in need as a universal value. Our short-term focus is to demonstrate that poverty is not inevitable and that people can break out of poverty with the proper assistance. We partner with subject matter experts, local and international NGOs, universities and colleges, churches, and service organizations to achieve our goal.

Please join us on Sunday, October 4, as we welcome a special guest from Food For The Poor.

## **CHRISTMAS SHOEBOXES AVAILABLE NOW**



Many of you like to get an early start on filling shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. Shoeboxes are now available in the choir pews on the right. A label is inside each shoebox. Thanks for helping with this important ministry.

Also, special offering envelopes are now available in the Narthex for your gifts for this important ministry.

## **PICTORIAL DIRECTORY**

We would like to create a new updated pictorial directory for our congregation. Rather than going to the expense of hiring an outside company to do this we would like to complete this project in-house. But we will need your help. Please email to us a digital photo of your choosing of you and your family members who worship at Grace. It does not have to be a formal portrait but should clearly show everyone's faces. If you do not have one we can help you take one. We would like to put this together as soon as possible so please start sending in your photos now. So far, we have received only 8 photos so there remains quite a bit to do before we are ready to print the new directory.



**CONGRATULATIONS** to Michael and Emily Biggerstaff on the birth of their daughter, Avery, around midnight on June 25. Congratulations also to the proud grandparents, Allen and Sherry Biggerstaff.

### ***Blessing Box Maintenance & Replenishment Schedule***

**Week 1 – Stewardship Finance Ministry Team**

**Week 2 – Discipleship Ministry Team**

**Week 3 – Worship Ministry Team**

**Week 4 – Stewardship Property Ministry Team**

**Week 5 - (if applicable) – Discipleship Ministry Team**