

Grace Notes



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

email: gracenalcnewton@aol.com

website: www.gracelutheran-newton.org

Church Office: 704-462-1035

Pastor Doug: (980)234-8848 pastorhefner@aol.com

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

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Discerning God's Vision for Grace!

A Message from Pastor Doug Hefner

In Proverbs 29:18a we read, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish."*

Acts 20: ²² St. Paul said to the Ephesian leaders: *"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."*

The following exchange between two of the characters, Alice and the Cheshire Cat, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is worth considering:

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

That depends a good deal on where you want to get to, said the Cat.

I don't much care where, said Alice.

Then it doesn't matter which way you go, said the Cat.

So long as I get somewhere, Alice added as an explanation.

Oh, you're sure to do that, said the Cat, if you only walk long enough.

This conversation reminds us of many people of our day. They really don't care or know or understand where they are going (especially spiritually) so any road or path is fine with them. There are others who have loosely defined goals but don't invest the time to develop a plan or path for it to happen. But look at St. Paul's purpose and vision that he expressed to the Ephesian leaders: *"my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good new of God's grace."* St. Paul had a vision, and he was determined to give his all in trusting God to help him carry it out. As

God's people in Christ, we have a vision in God's Word which gives us purpose and passion for God's mission. Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life, the only path to salvation and eternal life. Only in Christ can we fulfill the **Great Commandment** (Love God, love neighbor as yourself) or the **Great Commission** (Go make disciples, baptize, teach). As you can see it is important to seek God's vision for our lives and church. Having a clear vision will help us to see the steps that we should take to reach our goal.

The following excerpt is from the book entitled **Visioneering**:

Everyone ends up somewhere in life. Some people end up somewhere on purpose. Those are the ones with vision. They may have other qualities also, but they certainly have vision for the different roles they carry in life. They have also mastered the process of visioneering. Visioneering is the course one follows to make dreams a reality, to turn ideas into something of substance. This book is about visioneering.

A clear vision, along with the courage to follow through on it, greatly increases your chances of coming to the end of your life satisfied, and able to say, "I did it. My life counted." Without vision, odds are you will come to the end of your life and wonder. Vision changes how you approach life, transforming the mundane into the meaningful. In particular, vision brings four things into our daily lives:

- 1. **Passion.** Vision evokes emotion! And the clearer the vision, the stronger the emotion.*
- 2. **Motivation.** Vision-driven people are motivated people. Find someone who lacks motivation and I'll show you someone who lacks vision.*
- 3. **Direction.** Vision sets a direction for our lives, simplifying our decision-making. Anything that moves us towards our vision we embrace; anything else we approach with caution. Vision prioritizes our values and helps us determine what is most important.*
- 4. **Purpose.** A vision gives you a reason to get up in the morning. For a Christian, our lives are intended to honor God, which includes discovering what HIS vision is for our lives. Until we discover His purpose for us, there will always be a hole in our soul.*

In Proverbs 29:18a we read, ***"Where there is no vision, the people perish."*** We all know that having short-term plans/goals as well as long-term plans/goals ignites our **purpose, passion and participation**. It helps us to know where we are going and what we are hoping to accomplish for the glory of God. We have taken some time in August on Sunday mornings to reflect upon God's vision for Grace. First, **pray** for God's Holy Spirit to open everyone's heart to discern God's vision for Grace and their personal lives through God's Word. Second, share your **passion** to serve God in our church, community, state, nation and world. What are those ministries that tug at your heart for which God has given you passion to make a difference? It is important to share your God-given **Passion** with the

church and community. In the next paragraph I will share some of the passion that has been shared in our group so far. 3. **Purposeful participation** happens as we dedicate our time, talent and treasure to be used for ministry and for developing new ministries. You can have great passion, but if you don't act on it, nothing will happen. Jesus said in Matthew 7 that the wise ones are those who hear God's Word and put it into action. The Book of James amplifies these words of Jesus when James wrote, don't just be hearers of the Word, also be DOERS of the Word. 4. **Prioritize and Plan for Ministry** – Ultimately, we will need to prioritize the needs that we identify and begin making a plan for ministry.

In our meetings so far, we have identified the following ministries that we should prioritize as we move forward into God's vision for Grace. 1. **Youth and Family Ministry** It is important that we pass on the faith to the next generation. We need to make children, youth, and families our priority. This includes Sunday School/Confirmation for our youth, youth gatherings that include fellowship, service, retreats, and opportunities for growing in discipleship; perhaps a preschool to begin engaging children and families in our community; and engaging our community through youth and family events like a Fall Festival Trunk or Treat, etc. 2. **Discipleship** Understanding that we are disciples of Christ, called to follow Christ, to be transformed in Christ to live out our faith as we disciple others. This includes understanding the Gospel and being able to share it with others in a relational way and your spiritual gifts and talents to be used in proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed. This includes reaching out to our community, welcoming visitors and discipling them into the faith to follow Christ. We did a two-month long challenge, "Pray and Go", that emphasized what it means to be a "great commission Christian." 3. **Worship and Music** – Many would like to see more music opportunities like restarting a choir, getting more instruments/vocalists involved in the worship, and having special guests like "Willow Creek". We talked about some things that require much more thought and prayer, for example: having a mixture of praise and worship music with hymns, projectors and screens to help with worship, and possibly another service time that would provide a contemporary style of worship. 4. **Outreach to our Community** – We have done 2 mailings to over 2600 addresses each time. We have Facebook and a website, but we are looking for more effective ways to get the word out about our ministries. We also talked about a new sign and do more with signage. We are praying for ways that we might get to know the community and its needs better. We have a demographic study of our area spreading out 20 minutes driving time in all directions. This was sent out in email to the church. We will print a few copies for you to look at if you don't have computer access. Here are a few

statistics: 121,500 people are in this area representing 50,000 households. About 15% are below poverty and 30% have at least 1 disabled person. 20% are 65 and older. 7% are widowed. There are 24,000 children under the age of 18. There are 8300 households married with children; 1300 households with children with a single father and 4000 households with children and a single mother. And one of the most important statistics: well over 50% of the people are not involved in a church. We talked about our community events like the Fall Festival Trunk or Treat or the Breakfast with Santa and how these events can help us to connect with the community. Some churches offer a free meal to the community, either a dinner or breakfast. We are getting involved in more community ministries like Back Pack Pals (food for students in need at local schools), Ashure Ministry (Hunger Walk on Oct 4), and Safe Harbor just to name a few. We will continue to look for ways to connect to this community. 5. **Revival of Membership** – you may also participate in a survey about Grace Church and its ministries. We hope to gain some insight into our strengths and our growing edges. Survey Link <https://churchhealthreport.com/survey/?s=YQ3U7AB> Click on this link or put it or put into your browser and the survey will come up. We need more member participation, and we need to organize our ministry teams to be effective.

There will be more ways for you to give feedback and to participate. We have one more meeting on August 30 at 9:30am. At that meeting we will decide how we want to move forward with a renewed vision. As St. Paul said so beautifully, **“my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”** We too are saved and set free in the Lord and are called to run the race of faith as we take up our work that the Lord has given us to do for His glory and for the building up of His Church. We want our lives to be a living testimony to the Good News of God’s grace! Let’s pray for the revival of God’s Church here at Grace as we discern God’s vision for us!

In Christ’s Service, Pastor Doug

GRACE HOSTS BLUEGRASS BAND



Grace will hosting "The Four Walls Bluegrass Gospel Band" on Sunday, Oct 11 at 5pm. If weather permitting, the concert will be in the outdoor shelter. We will have a BBQ Dinner afterwards. Please bring a side dish to share or a dessert. BBQ,

Buns, Sauce, Slaw, Cups, Plates, Drinks and Ice will be provided. Please invite your friends and family!

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR SEPTEMBER

❖ Lector	Stormy Shull
❖ Ushers	Jeff Scronce & David Wilfong
❖ Communion Assistants	Cindy Bivens & Tina Hefner
❖ Altar Preparation	Cindy Bivens
❖ 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 SEPTEMBER

September 6	Todd Childers	September 13	Rick & Cindy Bivens
September 20	Tim Eckard	September 27	Lula Ingle

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

Please remember to pick up your flowers after worship. If you do not want them at home our shut-ins would love them or a donation to a nursing home would also be greatly appreciated.

ATTENDANCE AND GIVING TO OUR LORD'S WORK FOR AUGUST

	7/26/26	8/2/26	8/9/26	8/16/26	8/23/26
Sunday School	7	9	21	18	25
Worship	39	38	43	39	44
General Fund Offerings	\$1,485	\$2,445	\$2,944	\$1,570	\$1,497

Upcoming Dates:

- + *Sun., Sept. 13: Grandparents Sunday, 10:30am – Gift/Prayers/Blessing for Grandparents*
- + *Wed., Sept. 16: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
- + *Sun, Sept 20: Homecoming Worship Service followed by Covered Dish Luncheon in Shelter*
- + *Sat., Oct. 3: Blessing of the Animals Service at Grace Outdoor Shelter 5:00pm*
- + *Sun., Oct. 4: Food for the Poor Sunday 10:30am; Catawba Co. Walk for Hunger 3:00pm*
- + *October Possible Bazaar (Yard sale) with Octoberfest foods as a fundraiser for hunger.*
- + *Wed., Oct. 21: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
- + *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.*
- + *Sun, Nov. 15: Whisnant Family Reunion – Fellowship Hall – 1:00pm*
- + *Wed., Nov. 18: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
- + *Nov. 25: Christ the King Sunday 10:30am, Last Sunday in Church Year*
- + *Wed, Nov. 25: Community Thanksgiving Service 6pm Dinner, 7pm Worship*
- + *Sat., Nov. 28: Hanging of the Greens, 10:00 am*
- + *Nov. 29: Advent Season 11/29:12/24 begins with First Sunday of Advent.*
- + *Wed., Dec. 2: Fred T. Foard Seniors Luncheon – 12:00pm at Grace*
- + *Sat., Dec. 6: Breakfast with Santa, Pancakes with fixings, Crafts, Music, Storytime*
- + *Wed., Dec. 16: Grace Senior Luncheon – 12:00pm*
- + *Thur., Dec. 24: Christmas Eve Candlelight and Holy Communion Service 5pm*
- + *Sun., Jan. 3, 2027: New Year's Sunday Service - 10:30am*

We need each of you to help with these ministry / mission opportunities. Let us know how you want to lead and help with these events. Thank you!

FRED T. FOARD SENIOR LUNCHEON will be held on Wednesday, September 2nd at 12:00 noon at Ebenezer UMC. All are invited!

THE GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST will be held on Saturday, September 12th 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 GRACE SENIOR LUNCHEON will be held on Wednesday, September 16th at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall.

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE LEADERSHIP MINISTRY BOARD is scheduled for Monday, September 21st at 6:00 pm.

CAROLINAS LUTHERAN WOMEN

The Carolinas Lutheran Women (CLW) Council joyfully invites you to our Sixteenth Annual Convocation this October, hosted by Organ Lutheran Church at Faith Lutheran Church. We would be honored to have the women of your congregation join us for a day of faith, joy, and worship!

*“The Oil of Gladness” by Pastor Marty Ramey
Saturday, October 17, 2026 - 8:30am Registration
9:00am - 2:30pm Program, Activities, & Worship
Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church
205 S Main Street Faith, NC 28041*

CHECK IT OUT! New Titles in the Library!

- *The Hope of Heaven* by Sheila Walsh. How the promise of eternity changes everything.
- *Twelve Extraordinary Women* by John MacArthur. How God shaped women of the Bible and what He wants to do with you.

Also, with our warm and cold months staying inside can be a little boring. Along with checking out a library book, you will soon be able to check out a jigsaw puzzle. If you have a puzzle(s) that you have finished and think someone else would enjoy, please consider donating it to our library. Or stop by to see the puzzles we have available for your puzzling enjoyment!

THRIVENT MEMBERS

If you are a Thrivent member you are eligible to apply for \$250 two times per year to benefit a charity or community project such as Ashure Ministry or our very own Blessing

Box. To apply, call 800-847-4836. You will answer a few basic questions about your project and it only takes a few minutes. This is a great way to fund special projects here at Grace!

ASHURE MINISTRY FOOD ASK for the month of September is peanut butter and jelly. 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 647 pounds of food to Ashure in addition to the giving for our Blessing Box. Moving forward, the 2nd 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.

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 Pastor Robert Lee Berger from Food For The Poor.

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY

The deadline for submitting your pictures is Sunday, September 13th. 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. If you would like someone to take a picture for you please see Todd Childers immediately after worship.