

20 *March* 25

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church Messenger



Pastor's Reflection

Tom Brodbeck

If you are joining me in the congregational challenge to read through the Old Testament in 2025, you are currently mired in rules and regulations about everything – from the size and color of the fabrics to the types of offerings for specific sins. You have read lists of people – nothing specific about any of them – just names you likely don't know much about (and never will). The readings may lack inspiration and your diligence to complete the assignment may feel like a chore rather than a joy.

But hang in there! There is much to understand from what you read, especially now as we head into the season of Lent.

Ultimately what those words of the Old Testament will teach us is that God wants to shape for Himself a people recognizable by the things they do and the distinctiveness from all the other people of the world. God has high standards, and even His chosen ones cannot meet them. They are expected to do so but fail miserably. Just like we do.

Laws and regulations only show us that we cannot measure up to God's standards. We need help, which comes in the form of a man on a cross. We need a Savior who offers us grace and mercy.

I think reading the Old Testament is a great exercise if for no other reason than this: We learn to be even more thankful for Jesus. So keep reading! Fight through it. The cross is just ahead!

MARCH OUTREACH CORNER



The CarePortal Team here at Grace could use some additional support. Would you be interested in helping us meet the needs of our local children and families stuck in unfortunate circumstances and just need a hand-up and not a hand-out? The bigger our network, the more likely someone can help. Your commitment would include receiving periodic emails from me regarding local families in need. The needs can include things like beds, furniture, appliances, clothing, gift cards for groceries or gas, help with utility bills or car repairs, baby supplies etc. You in turn reach out to your friends/family to see if anyone has the needed items to donate to this family or are able to supply them yourself.

Help is needed with securing the items, delivering the items, and following up with the families after the connections. Please reach out to Sandy Thompson if you are interested in learning more or becoming part of our team: sandy.thompson@grace-nalc.org, 937-399-6257.

Why should you consider joining the CarePortal Team:

I am blessed to see the appreciation of the children and families who are struggling to just have a little help and know someone cares.....*Robert Thompson*

We all want to help individuals who just need a little boost to make it over a hump that's preventing their success. CarePortal is the only platform/organization I've discovered through the years that has all the background work done for you, a truly efficient/effective way to have positive impact on those interested in moving FORWARD.
.....*Matt Rugh*

I am blessed to be a part of the Care Portal program. I feel that it reaches a large number of hard working people that have been impacted by high inflation or other changes happening in their personal life. I feel that God is working through us to provide these people with tangible needs to help themselves and their families. It also allows us to reach out to them on a spiritual level to let them know that Jesus loves us all.
.....*Cathy Zernehel*

You can also donate to our CarePortal fund from the home page of our website www.grace-nalc.org, from the Grace App, or by marking your check to Grace with CarePortal.

MARCH OUTREACH CORNER



SAVE THE DATE:

Sunday April 6th, Heather, our Global Worker we heard give a Temple Talk back in January, will join us via Zoom, technology permitting, to update us on her work and her needs in the Middle

East. Heather is connected with Christian Missionary Fellowship International helping to spread the Gospel around the world. I pray you are able to attend and hear how her work is going so far and learn how you can support her efforts, especially in prayer.

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is hard to believe that I am already writing articles for the March Messenger. Where did January go?

I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on a couple of things. I am currently taking my second class in my journey to earn a Master of Arts in Religion and be ordained as a deacon in the North American Lutheran Church. So far all is

going well but it has certainly been quite a vocabulary learning curve! It has been great having Michelle's advice to guide me and now with Lorenzo on staff, I have even more insights at my fingertips. It will be at least a 4-year journey for me as I continue to work full time and do ministry, I plan to mostly take one class at a time.

My work here continues to grow and keep me busy in a variety of ways from helping make improvements to our sound board, to managing and bringing on new staff, helping with the NALC 20/20 Vision Campaign, and helping with the variety of ministries and activities we have going on here at Grace.

We are currently searching for a new **Director of Lay Ministry**. Please see the website for a full job description and application packet. Please share with anyone you think might be a good fit for this position.



LENT 2025

Within a few days after you read these words, the Lenten season will be underway. It officially begins with Ash Wednesday on March 5. Our congregation will gather to worship at noon and 7 p.m. Both services will feature Holy Communion and the Imposition of Ashes.

The theme for Lent 2025 will be "Garden to Garden: Growing from Death to Life." Each Sunday when you come into worship you are confronted with that huge stained glass window of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. That "Garden" experience of Jesus was necessitated by the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Gethsemane, of course, is not the end, for Jesus still had to be crucified and resurrected – two other events that took place in garden-similar locations. It is that image that prompted my thinking about this theme. From the moment of death brought about by that first sin in the Garden of Eden we have been "growing" our way toward the life that is ours because of the garden of the empty tomb. Thus, garden to garden.

Our sermons will talk about such themes as unfruitfulness and repentance as necessary stages in the journey toward new life, as you will see below.

Our theme verse for this season is captured in these words as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.
(1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

The message conveyed here does not specifically mention a garden, but it does present the same picture ... from Adam's sin to Christ's resurrection. You are encouraged to memorize it.

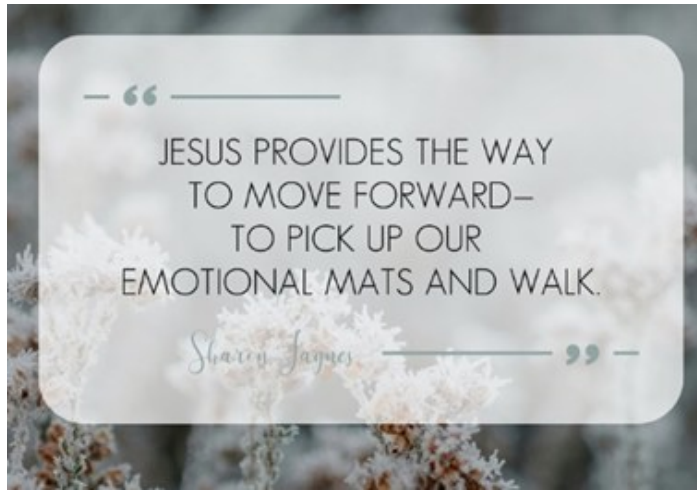
We will also worship each Thursday evening from March 13 through April 10 at 7 p.m. Joining Pastor Tom in worship leadership will be Lorenzo Thomas, Michelle Kouse, Sandy Thompson and Pastor Larry Bannick. Each Thursday service will also provide an opportunity to be anointed with oil. Those services will be preceded by a soup supper at 6 p.m.

As has been our tradition, we will distribute nails for you to carry throughout the season as a reminder that your sins nailed Christ to the cross. There will also be a devotional guide, written by the staff of the Lutheran Hour available to guide your meditation during this season.

Good Friday sees the return of a pageant written by Jon Joyce, a former member of our church (and now part of the Church Triumphant). Terry Ankenman will be directing this pageant, based on the Stations of the Cross. The pageant will feature many members of our Grace congregation and will be filled with music.

Lent is a season of repentance and preparation, all of which builds to a glorious celebration on Easter Sunday. Come and take the journey with us ... from Garden to Garden.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LAY MINISTRY



I have written many articles since accepting the position of Director of Lay Ministry in 2017 but I believe this is the most difficult one to write. Many of you have said “we’re going to miss you” and I am grateful for those kind words. I want everyone to know I have left seven places of employment in my working career but none was as difficult to say goodbye to as this one.

I have had a wonderful time creating and sharing with all of you at Grace and I have made some of the most amazing friends working here and not seeing you three days a week will be a big adjustment for me. God led me to this job, and I am blessed beyond words because of that.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. I look forward to the next journey God has planned for me.

God's Blessings to all!

Janet

GRACE PRAYER BREAKFAST

On Saturday, March 1 at 9:30 a.m. our congregation will host a Prayer Breakfast as a way of launching into the season of Lent. A dozen of our fellow Grace members will lead us in prayers of praise, repentance, asking and yielding, and in songs of adoration and worship.

The service caps off with a meaningful time of releasing our burdens and concern as we set them on fire as a offering to the Lord.

You can RSVP for this event in the narthex or by calling the Grace office at 937.399.6257.

VALENTINE CELEBRATION OF GOD'S LOVE

Grace's Joy Guild sponsored a Valentine Celebration of God's Love for both men and women from Grace on the afternoon of February 11. The members of Joy Guild provided delicious snacks that included veggies, fruits, cheese spread, cookies and more.

Participants also enjoyed the musical portion led by Barbara Blackburn and the group did a wonderful job with singing a round (when multiple voices sing the same melody but start at different times.) The participants enjoyed the round so much they insisted on doing one more "round" with another song which we did again as the event concluded.

In addition, each participant received a wonderful valentine from Joy Guild as we entered, and Joy Guild also provided each attendee with a butterfly shaped plantable seed paper to take home. The seed paper was filled with seeds for wildflowers and, when planted, participants should have blooming wildflowers by late spring/summer.

Joy Guild and participants were pleased that Linda Sabo was also at our celebration. Linda has started One Sandwich at a Time Ministry to pack lunches for the needy in Springfield. As participants were leaving, the members of Joy Guild packed up the leftover cookies and candy in snack packages to give to One Sandwich at a Time.

The Joy Guild was appreciative of the response to their Valentine Celebration of God's Love.

Thanks to Joy Guild for planning and providing such an awesome, amazing event and

- for bringing so much joy to the participants and
- for helping each of us add beauty to our world and
- for providing love to so many lives (both attendees and recipients of Linda's One Sandwich at a Time program).



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR MARCH

During the month of March, beginning on March 9, the Adult Sunday School class will be utilizing one of the discipleship resources in the Grace library. This study is titled "The Path to the Cross" and features the teaching ministry of Ray Vander Laan, a teacher and historian noted for his insightful lessons while on site in the Holy Land.

This series of five lessons reveals how following the way of Jesus leads to the act of obedience and sacrifice at the cross. We will journey to Qumran, Machaerus, En Gedi, Jerusalem and Gethsemane, and be challenged to live our lives as the earliest disciples did – by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Join us at 9:15 each Sunday!

YOUNG AT HEART

Young At Heart group shared Christian fellowship the last 30 days at La Comedia dinner theater seeing "Ghost the Musical and recently "Jersey Boys".

February 23rd is the Covenant presbyterian concert series. Music director Eric Tyler Broggs in a recital of music from the bassoon, horn and clarinet.

March 28th, La Comedia Dinner theater musical "Into the Woods" "Happily ever After" Takes a Detour" Come Join Us!!

Roger and Sonya

LAY MINISTRY

DIRECTOR OF LAY MINISTRY, JANET RICE

The Lay Ministry and Stewardship Team theme for 2025 is JOY. We will display that JOY with red and white hearts. There will be two jars on a table in the Narthex and two baskets of hearts. We are asking everyone to participate by putting a **red** heart in the jar when you **receive** joy and drop a **white** heart in the jar when you **give** joy.

What is the purpose of these jars and hearts? We want a visual of the amount of joy shared here at Grace. As we go about our daily lives we need to stop and enjoy all that God has given us and share our blessings with others. Do not be hesitant to drop a white heart into the jar and acknowledge that you gave joy to another.

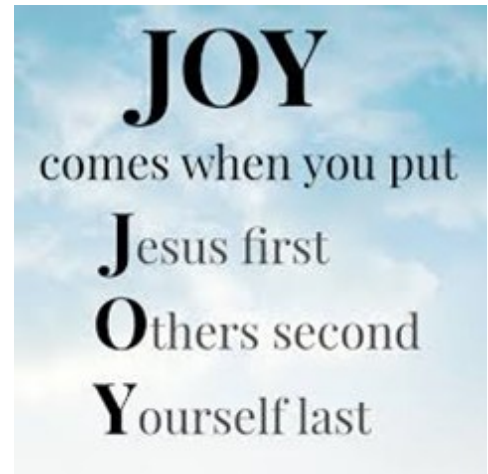
I would like to share a small portion of one of my daily devotions:

A young believer came to a man who had followed Christ for many years with this complaint. "I have lost my joy!" the young man said. The older, wise Christian responded, "Go out and do something for someone else. Repeat that act of kindness nine times. Then you will find joy!"

When we develop the habit of looking for a need and then meeting it, we will experience joy as never before.

Nehemiah 8:10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

God created us to share each other's load because a shared load is a lighter load.



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