

Grace Family Weekly Message

16 March 2023



ALL ARE WELCOME TO WORSHIP AT GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH THIS SUNDAY, THE 19th OF MARCH 2023.
 The Gospel reading is John 9:1-41. (See page 3 for more information)

THERE IS SUNDAY SCHOOL AND COFFEE FELLOWSHIP ON SUNDAY AT 9:45.
THE FOURTH LENTEN SOUP SUPPER AND EVENING DEVOTIONAL SERVICE IS ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22nd. *Soup Suppers start at 6:00 PM; worship at 7:00 PM*
Pastor Shawn O'Brien will share a message about the "Seven Last Words of Christ."

Lutheran Congregations in the North Central Conference, including Grace, are taking a special offering to buy bottled water for the residents of East Palestine, Ohio. Calvary Lutheran Church in Northwood is coordinating this project. A basket where you can leave an offering to buy bottled water for East Palestine will be in the Narthex on Sundays, March 19th and 26th. More information about this appeal is on page 4.

A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

The theme for this year's Lenten mid-week services at Grace and the churches in this NWOS Conference is the "**Seven Last Words of Jesus.**" Conference Pastors have organized a pastor's rotation that has a different pastor speaking on one of these "last words" at a different church each week in Lent. This week's Bible Study, in our current "The Story of Jesus" series, describes each of Jesus' last words, where they are found and what they mean.

Last Words of Jesus	Theme	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<i>Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing</i>	FORGIVENESS			23:34	
<i>Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise</i>	PROMISE			23:43	
<i>Woman, here is your son and Here is your Mother</i>	FAMILY				19:26-27
<i>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?</i>	LONELINESS	27:46	15:34		
<i>I am thirsty</i>	SUFFERING				19:28
<i>It is finished</i>	MISSION ACCOMPLISHED				19:30
<i>Father, into your hands I commit my spirit</i>	JOY			23:46	

The Seven Last Words of Jesus are taken from the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion which appear in Matthew 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49 and John

19:17-37. All four accounts describe the crucifixion that begins after Jesus' trial before Pilate and when Roman soldiers led Jesus to Golgotha where the crucifixion took place. The four accounts all tell somewhat different versions of this story. For example, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, Simon of Cyrene, carried Jesus' cross, while John says Jesus "**carried his own cross.**" They do not agree on who among Jesus's followers was present at the crucifixion. The Gospel accounts record Jesus' different statements as he suffered his agonizing death on the cross. Three of these statements appear in Luke, three in John and one in both Mark and Matthew. These are Jesus' last words as recorded in the four Gospels:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. This was Jesus' prayer asking God to forgive the Roman soldiers and others involved in crucifying him. This was surely the supreme act of loving one's enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise. Three of the four Gospels reported that two "**criminals**" or "**bandits**" were crucified alongside Jesus. Only Luke recorded a dialogue between the three. One criminal taunted Jesus: "**If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us.**" The other criminal said, "**we are punished justly...but this man (Jesus) has done nothing wrong...remember me when you come into your kingdom.**" Jesus promised this man he would be with him in "**paradise**" (heaven) after they die. This promise is often interpreted as a denial of purgatory, which for centuries has been a staple of Roman Catholic beliefs.

Woman, here is your son...Here is your mother. John reported an especially poignant dialogue between Jesus, his mother Mary, and his disciple John. Mary was one of several women who were present at the crucifixion. John was especially close to Jesus; he was described as "**the disciple whom Jesus loved**" (John 13:23). The Gospel of John reports that John was the only disciple present at the crucifixion. Here, Jesus seeks to restore the void in family relationships that his death will leave to ensure that earthly life will continue. Mary must now regard John as her son and John must care for Mary as his mother. Jesus raised John to the status of his own brother.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? This is the cry of a human Jesus who is suffering horribly. Matthew and Mark quote slightly different versions of Jesus' exclamation in Aramaic, "**Eli, Eli, lemi sabachthani?** Did a dying Son of God really say these words? Do they reflect Mark's and Matthew's desires to link Jesus' life and death to Old Testament prophecy, this time to Psalm 22, which begins with: "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"



The Crucifixion, as depicted by 16th Century Reformation artist Lucas Cranach.

I am thirsty. Only John records this saying, but all four Gospels report that soldiers gave Jesus “**sour wine**” or “**vinegar**.” This may be another instance of linking Jesus’ crucifixion to Old Testament prophecy. Psalm 22:15 laments: “**My mouth is dried up like a potsherd.**” Psalm 69:21 protests: “**They...gave me vinegar for my thirst.**”

It is finished. Mark and Matthew report that after Jesus received the vinegar, he cried out and gave up his spirit. In John, Jesus said, “**It is finished**” and then gave up his spirit. The Greek word that is translated as “**finished**” has a much broader meaning. It means to “**finish, complete, accomplish, or fulfill.**” Jesus is saying “**my mission to live and die as a sacrifice for human sin is now accomplished.**” This is the announcement of a great triumph.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. In Luke’s version of the crucifixion, Jesus called out these words and then “**breathed his last.**” These same words appear in Psalm 31:5. This is Jesus’ announcement of his return to be at God’s right hand in heaven.

WEEKLY NEWS AND ACTIVITIES AT GRACE

SUNDAY WORSHIP. This coming Sunday, the 19th of March, is the Fourth Sunday of Lent. The Gospel reading is John 9:1-41, which is the story about Jesus healing a blind man on the Sabbath. Communion will be served. The liturgical color is purple. Pastor Jaci and Church Musician Bobbie Bean will conduct this service.

CHOOSE HOW YOU WORSHIP. At Grace, you can worship in a traditional setting in the Sanctuary, or you can participate in worship while remaining in your vehicle and tuning your radio to FM 94.1. Grace’s worship services are broadcast on FM 94.1.

**ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN WITH US IN WORSHIPPING GOD
AS WE CONTINUE ON OUR LENTEN JOURNEYS**

© **PRAYER CONCERNS.** Please keep the following persons in your prayers:

Amber Barbour, Pat Bowe, Pastor Marcus Lohrmann (retired Synod Bishop), Graham Jacobs (infant son of David & Brielle Jacobs), Marilyn Goeckerman, Todd Hablitzl, Laurie Pangle, Tom & Cheryl Hoot, Dean and Marilyn Crandall, Matthew Rolf, Max Shiple, Rosemary Jones, Steve, Jody Angelone, Mandi Palmer, LaVerne Edwards, Bev Burroughs, Carol Jacob, Bethany Collier, Leslee Bundy, Tom Szor, Shelly Sherman, Barbara Harger, Patricia Morral, Karen Southwyck, Dustin Schmidt, Chris Marquardt, Stephen Andrew, Kelly Troyer, Nadine Crisologos, members of the Grace family who reside in nursing homes including Jim Flick (Commons of Providence, Sandusky), Donna Foss (Parkcliff), Sandy Cutchall (Genoa), and Ruth Hammel (Genoa), and members of the Grace family and their colleagues who serve in the Armed Forces.

If you know of someone to add to the prayer list, please inform Pastor Jaci or the Church Office.

- © **ATTENDANCE AND OFFERING LAST WEEK.** 55 people attended worship at Grace on Sunday, the 12th of March. Last Sunday's offering total was \$1,455. In order to fully fund the budget adopted by the congregation in November, weekly offerings need to average \$2,736. Thank you to all members of the Grace Family who attend worship and contribute regular offerings.
- © **COUNCIL MEETING ACTIONS.** The 9 March Council meeting this past Thursday included discussions and decisions on the following topics that will be of special interest to Grace's members:
- **OFFERING PRESENTATION.** *The process of taking offerings during worship by passing offering plates through the congregation was discontinued in March 2020 as a covid safety measure. Starting with the worship service this coming Sunday, the 19th of March, offering collection will continue to be done by placing offerings in an offering plate at the back of the Sanctuary, but the order of worship will now include the presentation of offerings at the altar. Offerings will be brought forward for presentation at the altar by a Deacon or youth representative just before the Pastor begins the communion liturgy.*
 - **PASSING OF THE PEACE.** *Grace members cherish its tradition of a long Passing of the Peace where worshippers actively greet, shake hands with, or embrace everyone present. This process was also stopped at the start of the covid pandemic. We currently do the Passing of the Peace with worshippers remaining in place while passing the peace with spoken words and gestures. The Council discussed whether the congregation is ready to change this, perhaps by encouraging worshippers to move about while greeting others without making physical contact. The Council did not make any decisions but did refer this to the Board of Worship which will meet on the 18th of April. If you have an opinion on whether or how Grace's Passing of the Peace should be changed, please pass it on to Worship Chair Joan Eckermann or Gary Anderson.*
 - **WATER FOR EAST PALESTINE.** *We have all seen the reports of the train derailment and chemical explosion in East Palestine, Ohio. Health experts are warning of "serious environmental damage" in the area surrounding the crash site. The resulting chemical spill has left the water in that area unsafe to drink. The people of East Palestine have been forced to rely on bottled water. To help the people of East Palestine, the congregations of the North Central Conference, including Grace Lutheran Church, are taking a special offering to buy bottled water for the residents of that community. One hundred percent of the money offered will be used to purchase water for the residents of East Palestine. This appeal is being coordinated by Pastor Bob Noble of Calvary Northwood. Bottled water deliveries are being handled by the First Church of Christ in East Palestine.*

Donations for East Palestine water at Grace may be made by placing offerings in the basket designated for this purpose in the Narthex.

A bottle of water may not seem like much when the problems are so big, but our collective acts of care and compassion can be a welcome gift for people who are

hurting and fearful of what the future may hold. We will collect donations through Easter Sunday. Please remember the residents of East Palestine.

© **EDUCATION UPDATE:** Children in grades K-6 meet on Sunday mornings beginning at 9:45 AM. In addition, coffee hour is hosted in the Fellowship Hall, also beginning at 9:45 AM. A regular Sunday School class meets this Sunday the 19th. You are invited to join the Sunday School children the following two Sundays for Mission Morning on March 26th and, on April 2nd, to assemble Easter baskets for our homebound friends. On March 26th there will be a Scavenger Hunt to learn more about the various mission projects our congregation supports. (*Note, successful completion of the hunt includes a snack!*). The Easter Project will include making Easter cards for our Operation Oreo servicemen. Please plan on joining us at 9:45 AM on both days.

© **QUILT DEDICATION.** The Piecemakers have now completed this year's quilt sewing project after producing 152 quilts. Ten women participated in this year's twelve Piecemakers' work sessions. In addition, five persons contributed many hours of additional service in their homes by cutting and sewing the blocks to make the quilt tops. Grace's traditional display and dedication of the quilts will take place during the 19 March worship service. 36 of these quilts will go to Lutheran Social Services, Sparrows' Nest (a woman's shelter) and Cherry Street Mission. The remaining quilts will go to Lutheran World Relief.



The Piecemakers' 2023 quilt production is staged in Grace's lounge in preparation for the quilt dedication on March 19th.

© **2023 LENTEN OFFERINGS.** This year's Lenten Offerings will be dedicated to the ELCA Good Gifts Program for the purchase of water filters. Each \$30.00 contribution buys one ceramic water filter that is capable of purifying water without electricity or chemicals. A water filter is a powerful, reliable way to provide safe water when it's needed most.

© **WORSHIP PLANS FOR LENT.** The third of five Lenten Soup Suppers and Mid-week prayer services on the 15th of March was attended by 15 persons. Pastor Bob Noble's message spoke about the PROMISE Jesus made to one of the bandits who was crucified with him. Upcoming worship serves at Grace now include:

- 22, 29 March. **Lenten Soup Suppers** and **Evening Prayer Services**, 6:00/7:00 PM. (Theme: The Seven Last Words of Christ)
- 2 April. **Palm Sunday**, worship, with communion, preceded by a palm procession that will begin in the Narthex, 10:30 AM.
- 6 April. **Maundy Thursday**, worship with communion and the stripping of the altar, 7:30 PM.
- 7 April. **Good Friday**, Service of the Nails, 7:30 PM.
- 9 April, **Easter Sunday**, worship with communion, 10:30 AM.

- 28 May, **Pentecost Sunday**, worship with communion, 10:30 AM. This will be the last Sunday when the Choir is scheduled to sing until September.

UPCOMING ACTIVITES AND EVENTS AT GRACE			
Date	Event	Time	Location
19 March, Sunday	Christian Education for Children, K-6	9:45 AM	Sunday School Room
19 March, Sunday	Adult Coffee Hour	9:45 AM	Fellowship Hall
19 March, Sunday	Sunday Worship with Quilt Dedication	10:30 AM	Sanctuary
22 March, Wednesday	Lenten Soup Supper & Evening Worship	6:00/7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall Sanctuary
29 March, Wednesday	Lenten Soup Supper & Evening Worship	6:00/7:00 PM	Fellowship Hall Sanctuary
2 April, Sunday	Board of Property	9:30 AM	Conference Room
18 April, Tuesday	Board of Worship	8:00 PM	Conference Room
20 April, Thursday	Council Meeting	7:00 PM	Conference Room
9 May, Tuesday	Board of Congregational Life	6:00 PM	Grace
Regular Weekly Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday mornings, at 10:30 AM, Worship, with communion (<i>in the Sanctuary</i>) • Tuesday evenings, at 7:00 PM, Choir Practice 			

FEBRUARY 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT – A BRIEF SUMMARY			
CATEGORY	February: Actual Income & Expenses	Year to Date Actuals²	2023 Budget for Two Months³
Offerings ¹	\$13,739	\$32,949	\$24,167
Unrestricted Income ⁴	\$12,803	\$32,384	\$23,233
Operational Expenses	\$9,045	\$25,775	\$22,383
Net: Income vs Expenses	\$3,758	\$6,608	\$851
Notes: ¹ 10% of "Offerings" are allocated to Benevolences; 6% are allocated to the Maintenance Fund. ² To determine current budget status, compare "Year to Date Actuals" with the "2023 Budget." ³ The 2023 Budget is calendarized to show the amount allocated through the current month. ⁴ Unrestricted Income" is 84% of offerings plus rental and miscellaneous income.			

© **OPERATION OREO.** Please keep all military personnel in your prayers, but especially: 2LT Eli Gerkenmeyer, U. S. Air Force; SSG Stephen Simkus, U. S. Army Special Forces, and Cadet Julian Sanchez, U. S. Military Academy.

- Anyone wishing to donate to Operation Oreo to help offset the cost of shipping and also the contents of the Goody boxes -- Just mark "Op Oreo" on the memo line of your check.
- If you have a name to add to our list or if you have any questions about Operation Oreo, please contact Jennifer Marquardt

- **TWO VILLAGES TOWN HALL MEETING.** The Two Villages organization and the Woodmore Community are sponsoring the **Annual Two Villages Town Hall Meeting**. This year's meeting will be at Woodmore High School in Elmore on Sunday March 19th, from 1:30 to 3:00 PM. The presentations will address suicide prevention and warning signs, and community resources. Panelists are Ann Huss, Suicide Prevention Specialist, and community member; Petty Myers, Toledo Chapter American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and Melanie White, National Alliance on Mental Illness. The program is free and open to all.

- © **DEACON AND LECTOR SCHEDULE.** Deacons and Lectors scheduled to serve in upcoming worship services are listed in the table.

DATE	DEACONS	LECTORS
19 March	Steve Simkus & Steve Blausey	Mary Lou Kohli
26 March	Jennifer & Mark Haar	Steve Blausey
2 April	Randy Jacobs & Gary Anderson	John Marik
9 April	Jean & Merlyn Weng	Jean Wietelmann

- © **ATTENTION THRIVENT MEMBERS.** The Portage Valley Federation of Lutheran Men is currently working on a project to raise \$10,000 to purchase new medical beds for the Luther Home of Mercy. They have reached almost half of their goal. This is an excellent opportunity for one, two or three of our Thrivent members to organize an event such as a games night, spaghetti dinner/supper, pulled pork sandwich lunch or any other idea that can be fun and help the men with their cause.

Contact John Heminger if you need help setting up your project. Contact Victor Schuerman, vschuer80@gmail.com, 419-287-4452 for details on the project.

- © **POCKET QUILTS.** A POCKET QUILT is a way we all can pass a tangible message about God's love to someone else. Keep an extra one and a card in your pocket to share with someone you see who looks troubled or needs a hug. You'll be surprised at the response you will get. Sometimes there will even be tears.

- © **BACKPACKS FOR HUMANS** (<https://backpacknation.space/>). This 501(c)(3) organization serves people in crisis in the Toledo area. Current needs for donated items include men's and toddler clothes, blankets, and pillows. Please bring donation items to the church and place them in the collection box in the Narthex.

- © **ELMORE FOOD PANTRY.** The Grace Food Pantry item for March is 13 oz. boxes of mashed potatoes. Grace hosts the Elmore Food Pantry, which is open on the second Friday of each month, from 9:00 AM until noon. Anyone who wants to drop off food items at the church may bring them to the church on Sunday or leave them inside the north door during times when the church office is open.

Our Prayer: Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GRACE CONTACT INFORMATION		
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