

Letters from the Dome

Moving & Grooving!

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus! Thank you for taking the time to read our third newsletter—whether in print or online! If you need to catch up on previous editions, we have the whole collection on our website.

Much has happened between now and our last issue! Grace Lutheran Church has really been moving and grooving! I definitely feel the excitement building as we continue to grow with each other in faith. Because there is so much to cover, we have decided to include significantly more pictures in this edition. You don't need to read about all the awesome stuff happening at our church, you can see it for yourself! After all, a picture is worth a thousand words!

This last summer we had a very successful Vacation Bible School program. Led by Dawn Farrell and many wonderful volunteers, we were able to share the Good News of Jesus to many in this Church and in our community! Christmas was huge this year! Not only did we march in the Center Moriches Parade with the scene of the Nativity, but we also added our Day in Bethlehem event! We had many from our congregation dress up and build stands to make our building look like 1st century Israel! I am looking forward to another successful VBS and Christmas season in 2024!

We have had tons of fellowship events over the past few months. Picnics, ice cream trucks, spaghetti dinners, and holiday parties! Our youth group has begun meeting weekly with monthly events! We see more

and more of the little children come join us for Sunday School! God has so richly blessed this congregation in 2023! My hope is that more and more of you feel that Grace Lutheran Church can be a second home. A place to belong!

Even our website has undergone significant improvements. I look forward to using our online presence as yet another tool to spread the Word of God to our community. On a side note, I actually have been in the process of writing some articles in a series under the title, "Lutheran Questions Today (the name is a work in progress)." I am planning to add articles to our website providing answers for tough questions like: "Is Grape Juice Really the Blood of Jesus?" "Is Cohabitation sinful?" "What are the differences between Lutherans and other Christians?" I'm hoping this type of content will be helpful for applying our Christian faith to our day-to-day lives. If you have a tough question that you would like me to write on, feel free to let me know!

It is been such a blessing to see this congregation grow closer together. Know that I am always here as your pastor to support you and care for you! Many thanks to Donna Smith, Ed Colwell, Linda Guterres, and all others who helped make this newsletter more than an idea, but a reality! I hope to see you in person soon! God's abundant blessings to you!

Pastor Peter Deberny



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Grateful, Thankful, Blessed

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! There is so much to say but I am not even sure where to start.

I have been attending Grace Lutheran Church since 1991. I had started dating Erin, my wife, in September and attended my first service at Grace Lutheran Church on Thanksgiving Eve of 1991. I saw it as another opportunity to spend time with Erin and fell in love with Grace Lutheran immediately. It was the music that kept me coming. Although I did not know it at the time, this was the beginning of my journey with God. I came from the Catholic Church and attended Catholic school. *That* experience was definitely different. I started to attend regularly and got involved in various activities, such as Youth Group, working with Pastor Robert Ernst in Confirmation classes, and playing with the Church Softball team. Eventually I became the manager of that team.

Over the years I had struggles in my faith. Is this right for me? Do I belong at Grace Lutheran? Should I even call myself a Christian? I definitely was no angel. But the love and support that I had from my in-laws, Ed and Josephine Griffiths, was amazing, as was seeing the joy that their family had. The amazing thing is that Ed and Josephine saw my potential even when I did not. I never completed high school; I was thrown out at the age of 16. So I decided I needed to go to work.

I was working for Nissan when a gentleman by the name of Mike Vernola reached out to me, through Pastor Ernst, looking for a driver for a medical supply company. I met with Mike and ended up accepting his offer, starting off my career. I ended up working for Mike for 16 years as a driver, then as a customer service representative, then as a medical equipment installer, then as a warehouse worker, then as salesman, then finally as a sales manager. In 2008, Ocean Medical was acquired by Henry Schein, a Fortune 500 company, whom I still work for today. Believe me I had my fears of facing this giant! One reason was that I did not have a high school diploma, and this company requires at least a bachelor's degree to do the job that I do. But a man named Frank Rivas told me, "we did not hire you for your college degree. We hired you for your ability and your accomplishments." And with that, I continued my career and

now I am one of the top sales reps. I do, however, take immense pride in the fact that after seventeen weeks of night classes, I received my high school diploma. I received it the same day my daughter Emily graduated high school.

I am grateful for my wife Erin and what she had to sacrifice so that I was able to move my career forward. Erin and I were blessed with two amazing daughters, Rebecca in 1998, and Emily in 2001. Just recently, Rebecca was married and we gained a wonderful son Richard. I am so very thankful for all these blessings in my life.



I LOVE being able to serve this congregation and I thank you all for putting up with me and allowing me to serve you! I know that my tenure as vice president and as an officer is coming to an end in the next year. It saddens me, but I am very grateful for all your support in my years of service. I am excited to see where Grace Lutheran is headed with Pastor Deberny. I am also excited to see some of the younger adults step up and take over the leadership roles in this Church.

All I have been given is a gift from God! I cannot even begin to tell or show you my immense gratitude towards all of you. Thank you for allowing me to serve both you and God in this capacity. Thank you all! Praise God!

Edward Colwell



The Concordia University Nebraska
A Cappella Choir

The Concordia University Nebraska A Capella Choir will be touring through the United States this spring. They will be performing at Grace Lutheran Church in Mastic Beach **on March 4th at 7:00pm.**

Admission to the concert is free. If you would like to support the choir, there will be an optional offering during the concert to assist the university with travel expenses.

Concordia University's A Capella Choir has been performing concerts and joining congregations in worship for over 86 years. It is one of the United States' oldest touring Lutheran collegiate choirs. The choir has performed throughout the United States, and internationally in Greece, Italy, France, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, India, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Austria, Spain, Mexico, South Africa, and Australia.

An Untamed Tongue

Surrounded by powders, lipstick, and blush she felt anything but beautiful. Events of yesterday played in her mind like a broken record. How could those words have fallen from her lips? The sharp barbs could not be taken back nor unheard from her friend's ears. Who was she kidding? She would never consider me a friend again. Oh, the pain I must have caused her! Why did I ever say that?

"The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly (Proverbs 15:2)."

We were all having such a good time, talking about work, life, and family. The air was filled with laughter as we shared stories of younger days and how we got to where we are today. With my defenses down, I felt so close to my friends all around me. Somehow, the guard on my tongue slipped and was now somewhere shoved away in my back pocket.

"Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit (1 Peter 3:10)."

It's so easy for me to fall into the ugly pit of gossip. It's almost like putting on a comfortable pair of shoes or a cozy sweater on a cold day. I'm an expert at asking seemingly innocent questions to elicit responses that lead down an alluring pathway of hidden secrets, finding out things I'm not supposed to know and not supposed to pass on to anyone else. Like a well-oiled door, I push open a discussion we aren't supposed to have, as we talk about things we only half know, and come to made-up conclusions we then declare as facts.

It happens so quickly—this falling into a whirlwind of gossip. The fallout is devastating. Trying to rebuild, heal, and re-establish the friendship can be near impossible, and usually the cracks in the foundation of the friendship remain forever.

These half-truths can break a person's heart, kill a friendship, dissolve years of trust, and erase any integrity I may have had before the words spewed from my pie hole.

Words! Words are meant to encourage not tear apart. They can be filled with grace or hate. They can give life or destroy. Words can injure, but they also can heal. And I needed to use my words and begin to beg my friend for her forgiveness.

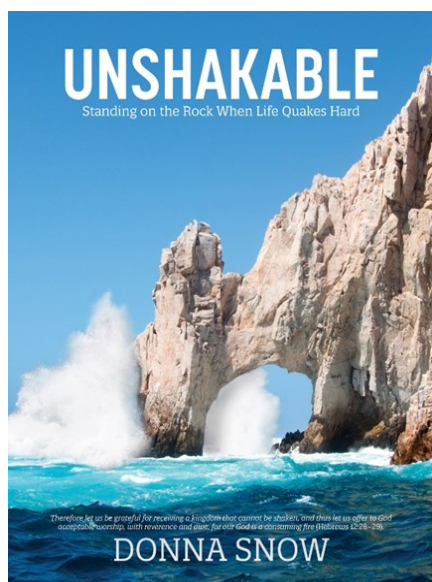
"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1)."

Pushing my embarrassment aside, I picked up my phone, called my friend, and asked if she would meet me somewhere to talk. She had every right to ignore my call or even to slam the phone down in my ear. But she didn't!

Being more grace-filled than I ever could be, she suggested we meet at a local café. I would be walking blind, not knowing what to expect, or how she would act. She had every right to rip me apart with her own words, even as I begged her to forgive me for mine.

With a churning stomach, I prayed for God's strength as I put my hand on the door of the café, pulled open the door, and hoped that forgiveness was waiting for me inside.

Linda Guteres



The Women of Grace's Bible Study continues! Make sure to be at Grace for Monday evening sessions that will continue throughout February and March to complete the balance of this most excellent workbook. We are using "Unshakable: Standing on the Rock When Life Quakes Hard," a Bible study written by Donna Snow, as our guide.

(Zoom conferencing will be made available for Monday evening sessions.)

Workbooks can be purchased through the LWML.org website for \$12.99 if you desire. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Guteres through lagster@optonline.net. Can't wait to start digging into God's Word with you!

Abundant Blessings

"Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 144:15)!"

As we look back with joy on the season of Advent and look forward to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, let us never lose sight of the tremendous blessings we have received. May you be blessed as you enjoy a journey through words and pictures of the last 7 months in the life of Grace Lutheran Church.

During Lent may we never forget the sacrifice that Jesus made for us by dying on the cross. Many people choose to give up something during Lent as a sacrifice. Some give up candy, soda, coffee, desserts, social media, video games, online shopping - even gossip and complaining. But there are other ways to serve for our Lord during Lent. What if we sacrifice ourselves—not by giving something up, but by *adding* something. We could read the Bible daily, do a daily devotional, send a card with Scripture to friends and family, or even simply being kind to everyone we encounter. Take a moment to search your heart and find a sacrifice that is right for you and your walk with Jesus. Be blessed and always watch for those special moments to share your love.

Donna Smith



Confirmation Day 2023



Discovery Camp VBS 2023

Stellar

Shine Jesus' Light



President Billy Farrell and Astronaut Mickey Wey



What a wonderful week at Discovery Camp! Games, arts and crafts, snacks, making new friends while singing and praising the Lord. The children truly let their "Light" shine.

Annual Church Picnic



Lutheran Bible Translators



*Farewell Blessings
To
The Tartaglione Family*



Our New Lay Deacons—Gary Miranda & Patrick Doyle



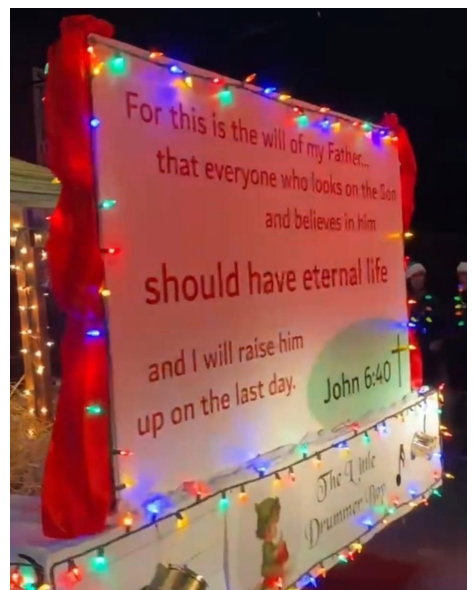
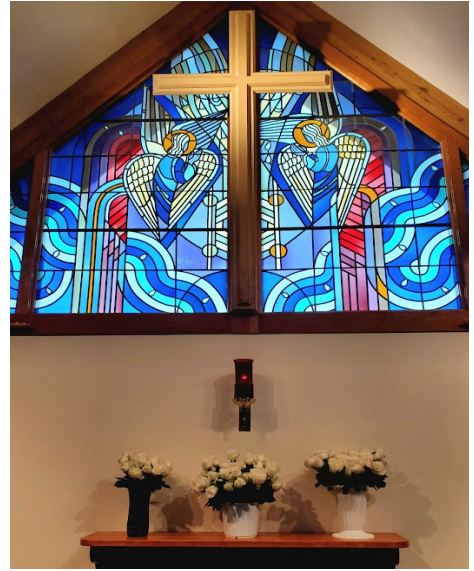
Lay Deacon Ed Ritzmann with his grandsons



All Saint's Day



The Parade Of Lights



A Day in Bethlehem

LINDA GUTERES

For one wonderful Sunday afternoon, our church was transformed into the streets of Bethlehem on the morning of Jesus Birth. A dedicated team of more than 25 church members worked diligently to make the day special.

President Bill Farrell said, "A Day in Bethlehem was a wonderful opportunity to journey back to Bethlehem and experience life at the time when our Savior, Jesus Christ was born." Everyone who walked through our doors that day had an opportunity of seeing, hearing, tasting, and even smelling what could have been happening on the morning of Jesus' birth.

Beginning at the census booth, moving to the "No More Room Inn" and beyond, attendees were able to visit a library, smell spices, taste fresh baked bread, learn about dreidels, and taste various fruits and vegetables, and then finally visit Mary, Joseph, and Jesus at the creche. As people strolled, Bailey Burke, our resident angel, made sure to tell everyone "Jesus, our Messiah, is born!"

James Gordon, one of our Roman soldiers, said, "I liked everything about 'A Day in Bethlehem'."



A Day In Bethlehem (cont.)



Grace Lutheran Church and the Social Outreach Committee is gearing up for a **Food Distribution Day** **On April 6, 2024, and** **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

If you are able, please consider donating a few of the items listed below:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Shelf stable milk (no refrigeration needed) | Baby food |
| Powdered milk | Baby powdered formula |
| Peanut butter other nut butters | Baby bottles |
| Canned soups with meat | Baby cereal |
| Canned chicken | Baby diapers |
| Canned ham (Spam) | Baby wipes |
| Vegetarian soups | Baby wash |
| Canned vegetables and beans | |
| Crackers and/or rye crisps | |
| Apple sauce and fruit cups | |
| Coffee and tea bags | |
| Cereal | |
| Spices including salt & pepper (in shakers), garlic, onion powder, parsley, etc. | |

Please place all items in the box in the Narthex. If you have any questions or would like to make a monetary donation for this purpose, please contact either Lynn Miranda, Melinda Miller, Linda Guteres, or the Church Office in this regard.

Thank you in advance for your generous support!

Upcoming Events

February 28th - March 20th at 5:30pm

Wednesday Lenten Soup and Bread followed by Service at 7:00pm

Monday, March 4th at 7:00pm

The Concordia A Cappella Choir Concert

Friday, March 15th at 5:30pm

Maureen's Haven Homeless Outreach

Thursday, March 28th at 5:30pm

Maundy Thursday Soup and Bread followed by Service at 7:00pm

Friday, March 29th

Stations of the Cross Service at 12:00pm

Good Friday Service at 7:00pm

Sunday, March 31st

Easter Sunrise Service at 6:38am

Easter Services at 8:00 & 10am

Saturday, April 6th

Social Outreach Food Distribution at 9:00am

Progressive Dinner at 5:30pm

Friday, April 19th at 5:30pm

Maureen's Haven Homeless Outreach

Saturday, May 18th at 9:30am

Women's Life Day

Thursday, August 8th

Duck's Game

August 12th—16th | Vacation Bible School

Holiday Party



Phone: (631) 281-8196
Email: church@graceinmb.org
Address: 240 Mastic Rd, Mastic Beach, NY 11951

Sunday Traditional Service
7:45 AM

Sunday Contemporary Service with
Children's Sunday School
9:15 AM