

# The Grace Lutheran

Newsletter of Grace LCMS – Greenwood, Arkansas

July 2025

## From Pastor's Pen...

### *Need, NEED, and Need*



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Punctuation matters. Just think how different a sentence is with the addition of a simple question mark. “President John F. Kennedy was killed by a lone assassin” versus “President John F. Kennedy was killed by a lone assassin?” That little question mark at the end of the sentence changes everything. This same reality is true of fonts and voice inflection. You don’t even need to add a question mark to change the meaning of something. Just change the font of a single word; just change the inflection of your voice with one single word, and the entire meaning changes. For instance, “I need” versus “I NEED” or “I need.” Now think in terms of needing oxygen/air. “I need oxygen/air to live.” Yeah, yeah... thank you, basic junior high science. Thank you, Captain Obvious. Okay... now imagine yourself at the bottom of a deep pool, and you can’t hold your breath any longer, and even though the surface is only 8 feet away, it seems like it’s 800 feet away. “I NEED oxygen! I need a breath of air to live!” Whether it’s the change of font in the written word or the change of voice inflection in the spoken word, there is a profound difference between “I need” and “I NEED” and/or “I need.”

So it is with our need for our Lord. Yeah, yeah... I know what you’re thinking. “Thank you, Captain Obvious! Duh! We all need Jesus, every moment of every day. What good Christian would ever say otherwise?” And yet... how often we live our lives as if we really don’t need Jesus, that is, until we NEED Jesus! I see this all the time when people are going through a very tough time in their life. As I’ve said many times, I never cease to

be amazed at how quickly people become “real religious” when suffering knocks their lives out of “cruise control.” All is well... and then suffering rears its ugly head. They didn’t really need Jesus when life was going well, but now...? Now they NEED Jesus! I’ve gotten phone calls at all hours of the day (and middle of the night), pleading through tears for me to come to them. “Please hurry! I need help!” Over the course of almost two decades of ministry, I’ve had plenty of people reach out to me from the depths of their sorrows (sometimes multiple times a week), “Can we meet? Can you bring me Holy Communion? I need Jesus! I need Holy Communion!” I’ve shared Holy Communion with the same suffering souls three, four, even five times in one week, not counting the time they received Holy Communion on Sunday. “I NEED Jesus!” And yet... once the dust settled and the sorrow subsided; once life returned to “normal,” the overwhelming NEED for their Lord also dissipated. They went from NEEDING Jesus to needing to go golfing and mow the lawn and go on vacation, and “I did just go to church two weeks/months ago. I went to church at Easter. I’m good. I still love Jesus.” They NEEDED Jesus... until they didn’t. Sadly, though, suffering in this life isn’t a “one and done” kind of thing. They will experience suffering again, and—surprise, surprise—they’ll NEED Jesus again... until they don’t. Welcome to the ministry.

Of course, this NEED for Jesus isn’t just restricted to suffering. It’s amazing how many people don’t really need Jesus or the church until a wedding comes along. Then they need to have a pastor marry them, and it needs to be in a big, beautiful church. Why? The same goes for funerals; probably more so, as a matter of fact. You’d be surprised how many people demonstrate by their daily fruits that they really have no need for Jesus in their life, but they NEED to have a church funeral. Why? Church funerals are for church-going Christians who are active in their faith. Church funerals are like funerals with full military honors; a funeral for a “Christian soldier,” i.e., someone who has honorably and faithfully fought the good fight; not someone who has sided with the enemy or just

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Pastor's Pen, *continued*...

plain gone AWOL. I mean... if you think the church funeral is going to somehow get you (or your unfaithful loved one) past the Pearly Gates, then you really need to hear the Truth. Once the last breath has left your lungs, that's it. You're judged. Either you were faithful in this life, or you weren't. Either you bore the good fruits of repentant faith, or you didn't, and the trees that didn't bear the good fruits of repentant faith are tossed on the burn pile (ref. Matt 3:10). A church funeral doesn't suddenly change things. You're not going to fool God with a sudden addition of hymns in a churchly setting, as if that will help you sneak by. You may not want to hear this, but you need to hear this. We all do. We don't need the church to lie and pretend and give false comfort (which sometimes happens). We need the Truth. The Truth is what saves us and sets us free.

Where am I going with all this? Simple. Summer is upon us. In fact, it's in full swing. Do you need Jesus? Absolutely! Duh! Everybody does, all the time, whether they want to believe it or not. Do you need Jesus, though? I don't mean from the perspective of something has gone horribly wrong in your life, and now you NEED Jesus! I mean do you feel your need for Jesus? That's a whole different issue. Even though you need Jesus (everyone does), you may not feel the need for Jesus in your life. When you don't feel your need for Jesus; when you don't recognize your need for Jesus, many other "needs" often wind up coming before Jesus, especially when summer rolls around. (Notice how the quotation marks cause you to read/hear this word in yet another way?)

Here's the thing, though: Rather than harp on the many variations of [false] "need" we manufacture in our lives and put before God, let us instead focus on "want." We all know that "wants" and "needs" aren't always the same (and often not). Genuine and authentic repentant faith—faith that understands the need for Jesus, not just when things are bad, but all the time—this kind of faith wants all the Jesus it can get! You can't prescribe this kind of faith. You can only describe it. I pray that this kind of faith is your faith. If it's not, I pray that you want

this kind of faith. I pray that through the working of our Lord's Holy Spirit in/through His means of grace—His Word and Sacraments—your "need" is changed to a "want," a genuine and authentic desire. I pray that you genuinely and authentically desire/want all that your Lord so willingly, unconditionally, and richly pours out upon you, every moment of every day, but most especially on Sunday mornings in His holy house. May the Word and Sacrament gifts of your Lord be your genuine desire, your joy, and your peace, not just this summer, but always.

Pastor Zirbel

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# Life in Christ...

**Pastor and Jeanette** will be on vacation 6/29-7/7. Prayers for Bon Voyage as they travel.

**Worship Schedule** during Pastor's vacation is as follows:

- Sunday 6/29 9:00am Worship only / No Bible Study
  - Sunday 7/6 9:00am Worship only / No Bible Study
- Rev. Mark Haas will be officiating these services.

Pastor Zirbel's **Wednesday Bible Study** will not meet on 7/2, but resumes on 7/9 in the book of Lamentations. All are encouraged to attend the study that begins at 10:00 am.

**Voter's Meeting** – The semi-annual "State of the Congregation" meeting was held Sunday 6/8 and included a discussion of the report provided by the Research & Priority Committee, and proposed investment options of proceeds from the sale of church property. No vote was taken. For further information, Minutes from the meeting will be posted in the Fellowship Hall.

## July Birthdays

- 3 Kim Pinckney
- 7 Jim Conaway
- 8 Janie Blodgett
- 9 Creenna Bocksnick
- 10 Ward Locklear
- 12 Perry Goines, Jr
- 16 Jack Lucas
- 20 Barbara Williams
- 23 Cheyenne Blanton
- 29 Mallory Blanton
- 29 Myra Werner
- 31 Michael Pharis



## July Anniversaries

- 2 Lee & Janie Blodgett
- 11 Scott & Julie Basham
- 21 Joseph & Kim Pinckney

### Remembering in Prayer:

*Let my prayer be counted as incense before You,  
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening  
sacrifice! Psalm 141:2*

**For the sick** – Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need, look with favor upon those who suffer illness and infirmity. Assure them of Your mercy, deliver them from the temptations of the evil one, and give them patience and comfort in their illness. If it please You, restore them to health, or give them grace to accept this tribulation with courage and hope.

**For those who grieve** – Heavenly Father, into whose keeping we entrust our loved ones, help us to look to You in our time of sorrow, remembering the cloud of faithful witnesses with which we are surrounded, Grant that we may one day share in the joys of those who now rest in Your presence.

**For faith** to live in the promises of Holy Baptism; for one's calling and daily work; for the unemployed; for the salvation and well-being of our neighbors; for schools, colleges, and seminaries; for good government and for peace.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God!



Grace LWML will be taking a summer leave from regular meetings during July & August. Meetings will resume in September. Please continue to keep the mission of LWML in prayer, and look forward to more LWML news in next month's newsletter.



Grace Lutheran Church  
18218 US Highway 71 South  
Greenwood, AR 72936

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## **Worship Opportunities:**

*\*Sunday Worship Service 6/29 & 7/6 9:00 AM*

Sunday Worship Service 8:00 & 10:15 AM

Sunday school & Adult Bible Study 9:00 AM

Wednesday Adult Bible Study 10:00 AM

*\*No Wednesday Bible Study 7/2*

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