

GRACE

Grace Lutheran Church
2201 Benita Drive
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

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Permit #7

GRACE

SERVICE TIMES

9 am Traditional Lutheran Service

11 am Grace Awakenings Modern Worship and Children's Church

SERVICE & CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, February 23—10 am

ASH WEDNESDAY—February 26—7 pm Service

GRACENOTES

FEBRUARY 2020

Victory in Christ

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
(Ephesians 6:12)

Life contains many experiences. However, one reality that cannot be denied is the struggle between good and evil. There is no getting around it. One can try and pretend that evil does not exist and that sooner or later our various scientific “discoveries” will usher us into a utopian age. But in the meantime, the evil in the here-and-now cannot be ignored. It is simply too prevalent, too painful and overwhelming. The bible addresses this horrific and debilitating reality head on. Scripture makes clear that despite the good intentions of our current social programs, political systems and psychiatric and pharmaceutical advances, evil cannot be eradicated by human effort alone. (Even though some issues can certainly be helped in certain circumstances.) According to the bible, the horrible reality of evil is not just an affront to God, it is something that only God Himself is able to overcome. In fact, God not only overcomes evil, but turns evil on itself and ultimately uses it for good. (Gen. 50:20)

This is very hard to believe. In fact, on a deeper level, it is *undesirable* to believe. We so want to think that we as human beings can address the world's cruelty, injustice, suffering and pain on our own. We so want to believe that such evils as violence, human trafficking, addiction and corruption can actually be fixed if we just have the right political policy, the right ideology, the right educational approach, etc. Like every previous generation, we really don't want to have to rely on God. We don't really want to have to need God. This ingrained mindset originated the moment Eve (and later Adam) bought into the very first lie that God is not good and cannot be trusted. The result being that now our basic human nature is to reject our dependence on God and take matters into our own hands. As a result, from our human perspective, having to need or rely on God seems humiliating and undignified – even shameful. I have heard more than once Christianity referred to as a “crutch”.

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...Victory in Christ

This distorted attitude makes trusting in God undesirable (even embarrassing).

The feelings of shame and humiliation when it comes to trusting in God is exactly what the evil one propagates. The basic lie of Genesis 3 convinces us that trusting in God is childish and naïve. It tells us that all those stories in scripture are simply fairy tales - intended for children but not to be taken seriously by well-educated adults. That destructive narrative is how evil continues to wreak terror and havoc.

The good news, however, is that the goodness of God is far greater than the darkness of evil. The good news is that the beauty and faithfulness of God is much greater than the lie. The good news of Jesus Christ is that the love and power of God is way stronger than the atrocities and despair we see all around us. Through the cross, God has revealed and demonstrated that His power is greater than the collective shame and blame of this world. Through the resurrection, God has proclaimed that He is recreating us in this world and redeeming it - once again bringing heaven and earth together as one. Through the sending of His Spirit, God is transforming and empowering those who believe in His Son to see this wonderful future as a present reality. In so doing, we who walk according to the Spirit realize that our struggle is not against each other but against an age-old-foe whose time is running out. For one day this world will be made new and God will once again dwell

with us in all His glory. There will be no more suffering or killing or violence or death. The old way of things will be over and a new age will finally be realized. And we who have been destined for this age will inherit what our hearts have always longed for . . . to see God face-to-face and to see in each other's eyes His divine beauty and truth. This hope is not a children's fantasy. This promise is not naïve. It is founded in the reality of Jesus Christ himself. May the joy and peace of God's resurrection promise be your strength. And may we each remember that His love is far greater than the evil of this current age.

Peace,



Pastor Steve

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All submissions to Grace Notes
are subject to editing for space and content.

Lenten Reflection

By Pastor Steve

Growing up Lutheran I used to dread Lent. Not only did we have to go to church an additional day, but we also had to sing the most depressing hymns while trying to elicit the most self-deprecating feelings we could muster. It wasn't until later that I learned why Lent took on such a feel.

Before the Roman Empire made Christianity its official religion, Christians were a persecuted minority. (Being a follower of Jesus meant the real possibility of losing one's income, possessions, family and even life.) However, after Christianity became the religion of the empire there were suddenly many "converts". As a result, the new *imperialistic* church created the most efficient way for these new converts to participate in the faith - the Sacraments. Adherence to the sacraments was now all that was required to be a Christian. Over time, the ultimate goal of Christianity lost its Jewish foundation of a promised new-creation wherein God would reunite heaven and earth as one, dwell among a resurrected community and destroy suffering, injustice and death once-and-for-all. Now, a new (Platonic) goal of entering into an eternal non-physical heaven as a non-physical being (possibly floating around on a cloud with a set of wings and a harp) became the norm. In this new paradigm, a growing emphasis on individual sins became a way of measuring ones' worthiness. In this new system of "sin-management" God became the impartial judge; keeping track of all our good and bad deeds. Consequently, as sinful human beings we could never

appease the judge and earn our way into heaven since it was impossible for us to ever attain more good credits than bad. Jesus then became the one who could give us enough sin "credits" or "forgiveness" to appease the judge and get us into heaven provided we "professed" our faith in him. This new paradigm focused so much on individual sin, eventually it became a near obsession. (Check out the voluminous decrees and writings on the various degrees and categories of sin compiled by the Roman Catholic Church.)

This Lent let us consider focusing on God's ultimate and profound promises regarding the world's future and our destined place in it. Let us take a closer look at how Jesus fulfilled all of God's prophetic promises (according to the scriptures) and how through His spirit, we can now live and participate in them. Let us reflect on the joy of the cross, Jesus' triumphant sacrifice and our belonging to His eternal kingdom.

"God, give us the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other."

"Nothing worth doing can be achieved in our life time, therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in our immediate context of history, therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do however virtuous can be accomplished alone, therefore we are saved by love."

~ Reinhold Niebuhr

Church Council Highlights

January 21, 2020

- The financial health of the church is good.
- The Council extended many thanks and praise to those who participated in prayer and spirit, in organizing and facilitating, in donating to, and serving during, and those who were on site, for the 2020 Rancho Cordova H.A.R.T. Winter Shelter program. All went well.
- The Property Committee continues to work through the Church's punch list of needs. Four security lights have been installed. The property committee intends to install new locking mechanisms for the gates on the church property as well as two exit doors. The gutters will be cleaned and the leaky water faucet in the narthex will be fixed. The Social hall flooring will be stripped and resealed and the carpet and church pew pads will be cleaned.
- The Outreach and Evangelism Committee is looking for volunteers.
- Pat Thayer has stepped down from the Board of Trustees. The Council thanked Pat for his service.
- The Annual Congregational Meeting Sunday February 23, 2020; one service will be held at 10am, followed by a potluck, then the Congregational meeting.
- The Council discussed a proposition which will be voted on at the Congregational meeting - to make an exception to the existing Trustees term limit of two (2) and extend it to three (3), thus enabling a current Trustee member to continue on with service.



Since at least the seventh century, *Ash Wednesday* has been observed as the first day of Lent. The name is taken from the ancient tradition of placing ashes on the foreheads of penitents. In the biblical tradition, ashes represent God's condemnation of sin, human dependence on God for Life, humiliation and repentance. Ashes are a reminder of death: "Earth to Earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Traditionally, the ashes for the imposition are made from palms from the previous year's observance of the Palm/Passion Sunday. We no longer produce our own, but purchase them instead. Ash Wednesday is considered the most penitential day of the church year and may occur between Feb. 4th and March 10th.

Lent begins with ASH WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 26

Following Ash Wednesday, *Lent* is the 40-day season (not including Sundays) of preparation of Easter. Lent has two themes—baptism and penitence. It does not focus on our Lord's passion—that is the focus of Holy Week.

Mark your calendars

Our annual congregational meeting is scheduled for:

Sunday, February 23

We will be having one service at 10:00 followed by the meeting and a pot luck meal. There are still council openings available so if God is moving you to step into a leadership role, please talk to Pastor Steve.

**Annual Reports
are due A.S.A.P.!**



After years of organizing our participation in the Family Promise ministry, Barbara Richard is stepping down. She has done a remarkable job and God has blessed many, many people through her. Thank you Babs! Now there is a need for someone to take over for her. If this is something God is moving you to consider, please contact Pastor Steve.

February Birthdays

- 1 Sandra Lyons
- 2 Verna Clark-Alexander
- 5 David Mudd
- 5 Arline Woznack
- 8 Peggy Hoyt
- 8 Helen Wakefield
- 13 Ken Keehner
- 15 Kayla Jensen
- 18 Rachel Jensen
- 18 Barbara Elliot
- 18 Alicia Shiftlet
- 27 Ted Rosenblatt

Flower Ministry

The 2020 flower sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board (above the drinking fountains) in the Narthex. If you would like to honor someone, remember someone, celebrate a special event, etc. please write your full name & who or what you are recognizing. The cost to reimburse the church is \$33.00.

Following the 11:00 a.m. Sunday worship service, the flowers are taken to a shut-in, the ill, the bereaved, etc. The recipient does not have to be a member of Grace Lutheran. If you have a friend, relative, neighbor who would enjoy receiving the flowers and perhaps welcome a visit, please let the Altar Guild Lady know. Her name is always listed in the Sunday bulletin.

FEBRUARY 2020

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 8 am Men in Mission 2 pm—6:30pm OLFG (fellowship hall and big classroom) |
| 2 9 am Traditional Worship 11 am Grace Awakenings & Children's Church 1 pm Grace Bible Church | 3 10:30 am Bible Study | 4 7 pm Led by Grace | 5 1 pm Faith Circle 7 pm Choir | 6 Worship Committee 12 pm Al Anon. Meeting 4 pm JAM 7 pm N. A. Meeting | 7 Office Closed 7 pm Sanctuary Reserved | 8 8 am Men in Mission 2 pm—6:30pm OLFG (fellowship hall and big classroom) |
| 9 9 am Traditional Worship 11 am Grace Awakenings & Children's Church 1 pm Grace Bible Church | 10 10:30 am Bible Study | 11 6:30 pm Trustees Meeting 7 pm Council Meeting | 12 7 pm Choir | 13 12 pm Al Anon. Meeting 4 pm JAM 7 pm N. A. Meeting | 14 ST. VALENTINE'S DAY Office Closed  7 pm Sanctuary Reserved | 15 8 am Men in Mission 2 pm—6:30pm OLFG (fellowship hall and big classroom) |
| 16 9 am Traditional Worship 11 am Grace Awakenings & Children's Church 1 pm Grace Bible Church | 17 PRESIDENT'S DAY 10:30 am Bible Study | 18 7 pm Led by Grace | 19 7 pm Choir | 20 12 pm Al Anon. Meeting 4 pm JAM 7 pm N. A. Meeting | 21 Office Closed 7 pm Sanctuary Reserved | 22 8 am Men in Mission 2 pm—6:30pm OLFG (fellowship hall and big classroom) |
| 23 CONG. MEETING 10 am Worship Followed by Annual Congressional Meeting and Potluck Meal 1 pm Grace Bible Church | 24 10:30 am Bible Study | 25 7 pm Led by Grace | 26 ASH WEDNESDAY 7 pm Worship  | 27 12 pm Al Anon. Meeting 4 pm JAM 7 pm N. A. Meeting | 28 Office Closed 7 pm Sanctuary Reserved | 29 LEAP YEAR 8 am Men in Mission 2 pm—6:30pm OLFG (fellowship hall and big classroom) |