

MARCH, 2015 • VOLUME 14, NO. 4

**DARN GROUND HOG ANYWAY!.....**by Pastor Ken Gibson



On the first day of February, we here in Woodstock experienced a blizzard and received over 19 inches of snow. The very next day our resident ground hog, "Woodstock Willie" had the prognostication that winter would last about six more weeks. Darn rodent anyway! As I pen this, the forecast seems to be suggesting that our resident rodent procrastinator was correct. The short term forecast that I am reading has a high of six degrees for one of the days in view. SIX DEGREES for a high! Let me go back to January, it was warmer.

But now it is March, and hope springs eternal this time of year. I can see signs all around that spring is coming. The garden catalogs are starting to get attention as they come to us in the mail. Spring training is happening in the south, in this, the year of the Cubs! (See I told you hope springs eternal.) The sun's rays have greater intensity as the earth rotates more favorably for our hemisphere, and the promise of Easter is not far off. In fact, it is only six weeks away. And I did not see my shadow and run away. No! I see the shadow of the cross on the horizon. And Easter is the true essence of our Hope and salvation. Warmth shall come and we who follow Jesus know this as truth, and we don't even need a ground hog to point us toward such, for we have the cross.

We are convinced by faith that the true prognostication for the future of us all is not found or predicted on a whim, or on the movement of some creature, but rather for us, our future hope is found on the cross. The Son's ray of light is eternal and his warmth shall forever shine on all of us who long for true warmth. All through Lent we are focusing on gathering around the cross and healing for the nations. May we come to the cross knowing that the price has been paid for us all, and the warmth of God's love never ends. We see the future dear ones, and our beacon of hope is the cross.



**WINTER WONDERLAND FUNDRAISER EVENT**—Join us **Feb 27**, from 5—7:30 pm for this fun inter-generational event! Great prize raffles for the adults, games and prizes for the younger crowd, and a yummy mostaccoli dinner for everyone to share! All proceeds benefit the Grace Lutheran Preschool Program and the Tuition Assistance Program. For more information contact Mrs. Chris at [clearman@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:clearman@gracewoodstock.org), or 815-338-0554 x213. We are also in need of volunteers to help run games in the gym. Many volunteers are needed to help out little ones. Thank you in advance!

**A SENIOR'S COMFORT DEPENDS ON YOU**—Senior Care Volunteer Network, in partnership with The Diaper Bank of Northern Illinois, is holding an adult diaper drive through the end of February. Adult large and extra-large pull-ups are in short supply for seniors in the county. Please leave donations in the red and white drop box by the front door. For more information, contact Aileen Zei at 815-455-3120.

**FIRST COMMUNION CLASS**—We will be holding First Communion on Palm Sunday, **March 29**, at the 8:30 a.m. service. In order to participate, parent and child must attend the preparation class-luncheon held on Saturday, **March 7**, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please sign up in the black activity binder at the Information Center by **Sunday, March 1**. For more information please contact Carrie Fiorina in the church office.



**ADULT BUS TRIP** – Sunday, **March 1**, our bus will be up front and ready to sweep you away right after the 10:45 service. Please be punctual. For questions, call Shirley Busse 815-338-9063.

**LENTEN MID-DAY SERVICE AND SOUP LUNCHES** – Join us for Wednesday mid-day service at noon during Lent, and then stay for homemade soup, bread, desserts and coffee. Free will donation taken. We hope you'll join us!



**PRAYER SPACE- MANDALAS**— On Weds. evenings in Lent, you are invited to the parlor for a creative/hands-on time of prayer before the 7pm midweek worship service. At 6 pm each week, Pastor Amanda will introduce how to use *mandalas* as a spiritual practice. We will gather for a time of reflection, prayer, and creating. You may color/create your own mandala or stop by for a space to wait & pray. All are welcome.



**BOOK FAIR**—Grace Preschool is holding a Scholastic Book Fair on **March 8**, between Worship Services. Our goal of \$1,500.00 in sales will earn our school cash and equipment. The Book Fair will also be **March 9th - 13th** downstairs. Questions, please contact Mrs. Chris: 815-338-0554.

**IT'S TIME FOR MARTIN!** - Come to Grace on Sunday, **March 8** at 3:30 and help us celebrate the life and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There will be spoken word, song and dance, all performed by a multi-age troupe of community members. Help support our local youth's efforts and talents, and remind us all of the ongoing relevance of Dr. King's legacy, and WE will provide you with a toe tapping good time.

**PRAYERS**—Please lift up these petitions in your prayers—To become a praying member of the Friends in Prayer, please submit name and e-mail address to [dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:dklabunde@gracewoodstock.org).

**World:** Bishop Eaton, Bishop Wollersheim; those serving in military conflicts, Arusha Town Lutheran Parish in Tanzania (our companion parish), Scott Bunch serving in the military, Henry Trebes (friend of the Laird family), Army Reserves, deployed to Cuba

**Woodstock:** Pastor Ken Gibson and his family; Pastor Amanda Bergstrom and her family; Grace Staff; Grace Council

**Health Concerns:** Bob Clemons (friend of Cathy Meyer), Gloria & Ken DeRango (mother and step father of Brian Pilgard), Ken DeVogelaere, Marge Dierksen, Betty Dusthimer (sister of Diane Thurow), Juanita Dycus, Tannie Fiorina (mother of John Fiorina), Patrick Fraily (friend of August and Theo Hutchens), Maroulla Hahne (friend of Bill & Martha Fleck), Cindy Hertrampf (sister of Tammy Hansing), Gloria Holy, Patrice Hoover, Pam Hull Gray (friend of Cathy Meyer), Mary Hurst (friend of Deborah Evanoff), August Hutchens, Theo Hutchens, Ruth Iwanicki, Christina Jaggi (friend of Adele Petersen), Donald Janavyak (friend of Shirley Berna), Fila Johnson (sister-in-law to Roberta Herzog), John Johnson (brother of Jerry Johnson), Vincent Lopez (father of Tom Lopez), Debbi Lynd, John McMahon, Gail Mueller, Jesse Myjak, Don Nusbaum, Carol O'Brien (sister of Bill Larsen), Gloria Ogle, Alice Pate, June Pienschke, Shawn Rank (son of Bert & Carol Rank), Joshua Rumschlog (great grandson of Eileen Weide), Joan Russell (mother of Sheri Conover), Laura Schoolcraft (wife of Pastor Ed Schoolcraft at Christ Life Church), Dick Schroeder, Ellen Schulz (daughter-in-law of Diane Schulz), Bob Shook, Sharon Sinkoske, Margaret Stawicki (mother of Nan Goerlitz), Samuel Sweeney (nephew of Melissa McMahon), Carol Thompson (daughter of Marge Dierksen), Josh Tillman, Brian Tobin (grandson of Enn Teetsov), Lauryn Trede (granddaughter of Pat Cervantes), Jerry Virgil (father of Melynda Mauer), Karen Wells, Jeannie Wilcox, Ruth Zirves

**Sorrow:** Herb Neubaum

**Joys:** Baptism of Lukas Patton Schindler, son of Nathan & Lauren Schindler and grandson of Pr. Ken & Jodi Gibson. Birth of Garrett Renner on February 2, 2015; proud parents are Ken & Kate Renner and proud grandparents are Ken & Gladys Renner.

If you wish to add a prayer request for this newsletter, please call the church office at 815-338-0554. Your prayer concern will run for one week and may be renewed. Submissions to the *Friends in Prayer* e-mail and phone teams may also be submitted by telephone to the church office or by e-mail to [Gracewoodstock.org](mailto:Gracewoodstock.org). Due to confidentiality laws, hospitals no longer notify churches or pastors when a member is hospitalized. If you or a member of your family have a medical procedure planned or is admitted to the hospital, please call the church office at 815-338-0554.

**AROUND THE CROSS.....**by Pastor Amanda Bergstrom

As we sojourn in this Lenten season, our gaze and prayers are centered on the cross of Christ. From the messy, dusty crosses of Ash Wednesday, to the flowing purple cloth draped on the cross outside, through our midweek prayer services around the cross for the healing of the nations, we gather around the cross of Christ as God's people.

As "theologians of the cross" we are so bold to call a thing what it is. The cross reveals to us Christ's redeeming love, shows us how God suffers with and for us, and in the cross we see and believe how life comes out of death.

In these next few weeks, I invite you to keep tracing the sign of the cross on your forehead, as a way to stay near the cross. This month, we will welcome another group of students who prepare to receive their first communion, and they will be tracing the sign of the cross on the loaves of bread they bake for that day. At the end of March, we mark Palm/Passion Sunday and then enter into April, and into Holy Week, where we follow Jesus' journey to the cross from crucifixion to resurrection.

God's peace and blessings be with you in these days, and may the cross of Christ ever guide us and remind us of Christ's redeeming, accompanying and life-giving love.

**SPIRITUAL GROUNDING FOR LIFE AS A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN**— The 2015 N. I. Synod Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) will be **March 14** at Kishwaukee College in Malta. Keynote speaker will be Assistant to ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton/Executive for Administration, the Rev. Dr. Wyvetta Bullock. For more information or to register on-line visit [www.nisynod.org/cre](http://www.nisynod.org/cre). Registration available through **March 11**. CRE brochures available at the Information Center. **All are welcomed and encouraged to attend.** Questions, see: Pr. Ken, Pr. Amanda or Mary Beth Martin-Bellavia (815-338-5194).



**CHILI FEST & YOUTH AUCTION 2015—SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 15!** - Yep! It's that time of year again when Grace members vie for the title of Chili King (or Queen)! Bring your best pot of Chili on Sunday March 15 for this annual event and plan to stay for the Youth Auction to benefit Grace Youth! Proceeds from the day's events go toward the High School trip to the National Youth Gathering in Detroit in July and the Confirmation Class summer trip to Sky Ranch in Colorado! **Do you have items to donate for the Auction?** We are looking for donations of any kind: Baskets of goodies, sporting event tickets, timeshare vacations, works of art, donations of goods or services, gift certificates, etc. For more information or to add your items to our list, please contact Carrie Fiorina in the church office. Watch for additional information and a list of some of the great auction items in the next newsletter!

**BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS**—Free blood pressure checks in the narthex between Sunday services, **March 15**.

**GRACE SUPPORT AT OLSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**—The school is in short supply of clothing items in the nurse's office. A list of needed clothing items, and additional information is available at the Information Center. Drop-off deadline is **March 15**.

**AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHOIR CONCERT**— This choir is composed of African children aged 7 to 10 years old. They represent all of the children of a continent and they demonstrate the potential of African children to become strong leaders for a better future. They will sing African tunes accompanied by ethnic instruments. The purpose of the choir is to raise awareness of the needs of children in Africa, and to raise funds for the support of the choir programs. The free concert takes place on **March 15** at 7:00 pm, at Joyful Harvest Church in Johnsburg.

**SUNDAY MORNING SWEET TREATS**—To keep this available, we are asking families, individuals, committees, groups, teams, classrooms, etc. to participate in providing a sweet treat for a Sunday of their choosing. Any type of sweet will be enjoyed. (Coffee and lemonade will be provided as usual) Additional information and sign-up on the Activity Board. Many dates still available





**MISTLETOE MAGIC 2015**—Brainstorming Idea Session: Date: Thursday, March 19th at 7p.m. in Grace Center. Please join the leaders for an informal session to brainstorm ideas for merchandise projects. Bring samples, pictures, patterns etc. for show and tell and possible projects to make. Ideas include projects for our sewers, woodworkers, general crafts, accessories, knitted and felting. All are welcome! Please contact leaders, Cathy Meyer 815-338-0512, Sue Aavang 815-989-5889 or Karen Reinhard 815-338-3036.

**MARCH - WEEKENDERS EVENT**—Join us at the Opera House for the play “The Drowsy Chaperone” – **Saturday March 21** at 8:00 PM. Our own Paul Lockwood is one of the actors. Let’s support the Opera House and Paul! Tickets are \$23.00 in the A section, group rate possible with enough people signed-up. B section is \$18.00 each. We would like to block a section, so please sign-up as soon as possible. Let’s meet at Stage Left at 7:00 pm for coffee or beverage of your choice before going to the play. There is a sign-up sheet and play description on the Activity Board. Any questions, call Martha Fleck – 815-451-6777.

**SENIOR LUNCHEON** – Tuesday, **March 24**— Our menu begins with a cup of soup & oyster crackers; followed by Terrific Turkey Meat Loaf, Herbed Twice Baked Potatoes, Vegetable Medley, Rolls & Chiffon Marble for dessert. Our program is “Seniors Helping Seniors” by Aileen Zei, Senior Care Volunteer Coordinator. If you need a little help or have a little time to brighten up someone else’s day, she can make the arrangements. Cost is only \$5.00, so bring a friend. Please sign up in the Activity Binder by **March 22** Questions, call Shirley Busse at 815-338-9063.



**GOD LOVES MARRIAGE**— Strengthen your marriage and see God and God’s church as key to your relationship. Attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend on **April 17-19**, at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Buffalo Grove, IL. See [www.GodLovesMarriage.org](http://www.GodLovesMarriage.org) for info. or to apply (\$45 application fee per couple.) Applications are due by **March 27**.



**WOODWORKERS FOR MISTLETOE MAGIC BOUTIQUE**— Do you like to create with wood? Please join an eclectic mix of like minded woodcrafters who make a variety of gift items for our Boutique. Contact Howard Hoyt (224) 858-4388 or Cathy Meyer at (815)338-0512 for questions.



**SEWERS FOR MISTLETOE MAGIC BOUTIQUE**— A dedicated group of ladies, meets during the year planning, preparing and sewing a variety of projects for our annual sale. Limited work space is available, but you can pick up kits or projects that can be finished at your leisure at home. Please Contact, Cathy Meyer (815) 338-0512, or Karen Reinhard (815) 338-3639.

**EASTER DECORATIONS**—Order forms for plants to help decorate our worship area for Easter Sunday can be found at the Sign-Up desk or in your service folders beginning **March 8**, 2015. The deadline for the \$12.00 donation is **March 30**.



**COMING SOON TO A KITCHEN TABLE NEAR YOU**— The first group of callers have been trained and calls have begun to members. Please allow them the opportunity to visit with you and discuss your involvement in the Prepare the Way Capital Campaign.

**2015 BULLETIN & PRESENCE LIGHT SPONSOR SHEETS** are available at the Information Center. A month prior to your sponsoring, a form will be sent to you requesting information and a donation of \$20 for the Bulletins & \$10 for the Presence Light. Thank you for helping fund the weekly bulletins and presence lights.

**CHURCH CLOSINGS AND EVENT CANCELLATIONS** - When severe weather arrives, Grace Lutheran Church will follow D200 closing and cancellations. All weekday activities, including preschool, will be cancelled if D200 has cancelled classes. Please check the [Emergency Closing Center website](#) or any of the radio stations listed on the [D200 website](#) for any severe weather cancellations.

**NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION**—It is time for a new member class! Grace will be hosting a new member orientation breakfast on **April 11, 2015** at 10:00 a.m. in Grace Center. We will be having juice, coffee and some homemade goodies. Those that would like to become members of Grace or get more information on what it means to be a member of the family here at Grace, please sign up at the Information Center in the activity binder or call the church office, 815-338-0554.

**AUGUSTANA FOUNDERS DAY REUNION**—April 25 & 26 in Andover, IL. All in one weekend, there will be interest groups discussing the Augustana Lutheran Church in America, WGN Radio personality Orion Samuelson, NIS Bishop Wollershiem, ELCA Presiding Bishop Eaton, and the Augustana College Choir. Printable copies of the schedule and registration forms can be found at [jennyhindchapel.org](http://jennyhindchapel.org).



**STEPHEN MINISTRY IS BACK**— This one-to-one lay caring ministry takes place within the congregation. The ministry goal is to support the growth/health of the Congregation through use of trained Lay Leaders. Grace is looking for people interested in becoming either Stephen Leaders or Stephen Ministers. If you are interested in learning more please contact Pastor Amanda, Pastor Ken, the church office or Claude Hutchens ([claud3hutch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:claud3hutch@sbcglobal.net)). The website also has more information at [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org).

**FUNERAL PLANNING**— Do you have favorite scripture passages and/or hymns? Is there something you hope to have included in your funeral service? At the last senior luncheon, Pastor Ken, Pastor Amanda, and Ron Fredriksen shared about the history of Christian funerals and discussed how to plan and prepare for your funeral service. We have a simple worksheet where you can note your favorite scripture, hymns, and other details, and we invite everyone to fill one out to share with your family and bring to the church office so we can file it away, and at some point know how to best honor your wishes. Please stop by the church office to pick up a Funeral Planning Worksheet, or you can find a copy on Grace's website under "Communication & Documents," and then "Forms and Documents." Thanks be to God, that even in the face of death, we proclaim the promise of the resurrection.



**RUMMAGE SALE**—Despite the weather, May will be here soon and so will the rummage sale. The set up, drop off, sale event is the week beginning **May 11**. Now is the time to mark your calendar and save items for the sale.

**SIMPLY GIVING**—Do you know about Simply Giving? Simply Giving is a confidential, no charge, automatic withdrawal program; and it is one option available for giving tithes and offerings. Simply Giving provides an option to give on a regular basis (weekly, bi-monthly, or monthly). Enrollment forms to sign up are available at the Information Desk, and on Grace's website (under "Communication and Documents," then "Forms & Documents"). As in our giving and our annual estimates of giving, if your situation changes, automatic giving through Simply Giving can be changed by contacting the church office. Automatic gift amounts can be changed, or put on hold with one week's notice. Please feel free to contact the pastors or church office with any questions about Simply Giving.

**LUTHERDALE 2015 SUMMER PROGRAMS**— Start making plans for the summer now. Programs available for K-12, as well as Adult and Family Programs. **Something for everyone!** Find more information and register online at [www.lutherdale.org](http://www.lutherdale.org).

**MONTHLY NEWSLETTER CHANGE**—Grace for Today is now a monthly newsletter. The article deadline for the April newsletter is March 15. Send articles to Lynn Nattress at [lnattress@gracewoodstock.org](mailto:lnattress@gracewoodstock.org), or the church office. Questions: please call the office at 815-338-0554.

Here is your link to the Weekend Worship Participants:

Schedule:<http://www.gracewoodstock.org/WeeklyNews/Monthly%20Worship%20Participants.pdf>

**PRIMETIME MARCH MEAL CALENDAR**

March 4 – Popeye’s Chicken  
March 11 – Breakfast for Dinner  
(Preschool fundraiser)  
March 18 - Pizza  
March 25 – NO PRIMETIME

**MARCH LENTEN SOUP LUNCHESES**

March 4 – Fagioli Soup  
March 11 – Pepper Soup  
March 18 - Beefy Vegetable  
March 25 – Beef Barley Soup



Lent Midweek Worship

**Holden Prayer around the Cross: For the Healing of the Nations**

Wednesday’s, Noon & 7:00 p.m., through March 25

**Visit the Grace website for the most up-to-date information for all that is happening at Grace!**



**GRACE STAFF & COUNCIL**

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Office Hours: 8:30 am–3:30 pm, M–Th

8:30 am–12:00 pm, F