

Voice of Grace

We are called to proclaim the Word and celebrate the sacraments. We gather in Christian community for nurture and support. We are sent out in service to others.

A Monthly Newsletter

April 2015



The Power of Being Human

by Robert Ball

With my graduate degree from Princeton and numerous public speaking honors packed in my bag, I arrived at a small-town church somewhere in Oklahoma and began giving them sermons as sparkling as my resume.

The congregation's response was gracious and encouraging, but not all of them caught fire with the fervency I had in mind. Especially the deacons. Most of them were young, my age or slightly older. I decided they lacked the maturity to appreciate the seriousness of the eloquent challenge I laid

before them.

There was one exception: Vilas Cople. Vilas was older – somewhere around 50, I guessed. He looked like an oil field worker, which he was. I didn't know exactly what Vilas did, but I suspected it was something that called for both the education that comes with experience and the endurance of hard physical labor. I knew that he cared about his church. He sang in the choir, attended Sunday school, and supported my efforts to light a fire under the deacons.

Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.



Adult Forum & Sunday School 9:15 a.m.

That was what Vilas and I discussed for almost an hour after the deacons' meeting one Monday evening. Then we parted to go home. As soon as I walked in the front door, the phone rang. It was Vilas. He'd arrived home and found his wife collapsed and dead on the kitchen floor. They'd eaten dinner together that evening, and she seemed to be in perfect health. But now this. Would I come over? Of course. It was my job.

I walked to Vilas's house, not only because it was relatively close but also because I was in no hurry to get there. Every step of the way, frantic questions raced about in my head. What was I going to say? What could I do? How could I help? This wasn't like preparing a sermon. For the sermons, I had time and books to consult; other than my desire to be seen as a master of motivation, there was no desperate urgency attached to them. This was different. This was the real thing. A man's wife, his loved and loving companion, the mother of his children, was dead. This was as real as it gets. Although it was my job, I had nothing to say.

So that's what I did for most of the night. I said almost nothing. After the coroner had come and gone and the body was draped and taken away, Vilas and I sat there in his living room for hours, mostly in silence, both of us. There were a few barely audible prayers that were mostly whispered, fragmented sentences. He was not educated in the way of words, and I, confronted for the first time with a human being in critical need, had nothing to say.

Dawn was breaking when I returned home. One of the clearest memories of that entire night was looking at myself in the mirror as I brushed my teeth and saying, What in the hell are you doing in this business? I went to bed thinking about what other lines of work I could get into without going back for a lot more schooling. Nothing came to mind.

Some two years later I received a call to another church. I was excited to go, but it was also a time of sadness, parting with a congregation that had been so understanding and supportive of their young pastor. They had taught me a lot and graciously assured me I'd done the same for them. In looking back, I got the better deal.

Now it was the last Sunday, the last sermon. Even some of the choir, who usually went directly to the choir room to hang up their robes after the service, were in line to shake hands and share a hug with their departing pastor. I looked up and there was Vilas, big tears rolling down his rugged red face. Vilas took my hand in both of his, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Bob, I could never have made it through that night without you."

There was no need to explain what he meant by "that night," but it was by no means immediately apparent why he couldn't have made it through that night without me. That was the night I'd felt totally unworthy and incapable of doing anything important or helpful, the night I was so painfully aware that I lacked the words and the power to function effectively in the midst of catastrophe, to penetrate the trauma with at least a glimmering of hope. But for Vilas, that was the night he could-

n't have made it through without me. Why did we have such completely different memories?

The truth is that we simply are not always magnificently wise in the face of life's tragedies. There is only one thing wrong with that old saying, "I'm only human." It usually comes out sounding like an excuse, when it should be an affirmation, a glorious affirmation of our thanks and our worth.

Editor's note: Robert Ball is a nationally known speaker, author and Executive Director of the California Self-Esteem Task Force.

If God Were To Remove All Evil

"If God were to remove all evil from our world (but somehow leave human beings on the planet), it would mean that the essence of 'humanness' would be destroyed. We would become robots.

Let me explain what I mean by this. If God eliminated evil by programming us to perform only good acts, we would lose this distinguishing mark - the ability to make choices. We would no longer be free moral agents. We would be reduced to the status of robots.

Let's take this a step further. Robots do not love. God created us with the capacity to love. Love is based upon one's right to choose to love. We cannot force others to love us. We can make them serve us or obey us. But true love is founded upon one's freedom to choose to respond."

— Billy Graham, *Hope for Each Day: Words of Wisdom and Faith*



The words to "Jesus Loves Me" are known around the world. This version was submitted by Linda Gaenicke who found a special edition of the beloved song especially for the older generation.

Jesus loves me, this I know,
Though my hair is white as snow
Though my sight is growing dim,
Still He bids me trust in Him.

(CHORUS)

YES, JESUS LOVES ME.. YES, JESUS LOVES ME..
YES, JESUS LOVES ME, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.

Though my steps are oh, so slow,
With my hand in His I'll go
On through life, let come what may,
He'll be there to lead the way.

(CHORUS)

When the nights are dark and long,
In my heart He puts a song.
Telling me in words so clear,
"Have no fear, for I am near."

(CHORUS)

When my work on earth is done,
And life's victories have been won.
He will take me home above,
Then I'll understand His love.

(CHORUS)

I love Jesus, does He know?
Have I ever told Him so?
Jesus loves to hear me say,
That I love Him every day.

(CHORUS)

God Bless Us All!!!

Praying Boldly *submitted by* Roberta Bymers



Prayer is much more than words. It is an expression of the heart toward God. It is an experience, a relationship, not an activity.

As a child of God you are invited to come boldly before God's throne. "Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," Paul writes, "let us . . . then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Every baptized Christian has boldness in prayer! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes it possible for each of us to have access to God. Have you utilized your boldness in prayer? Talk to God, tell God your joys and concerns, give God thanks and praise, confess your sins and your needs before God in prayer. It is both that simple and that difficult.

Prayer is a dialogue between two people who love each other – God and a person. Simply put, prayer is communicating with God. Every Christian can directly contact God at all times. But many of us tend to forget such a direct line exists or rarely connect until an emergency arises.

This message was adapted from "I Am She," a free downloadable resource.

*I am afraid that the schools will prove
the very gates of hell, unless they
diligently labor in explaining the
Holy Scriptures and engraving
them in the heart of the youth.*

– Martin Luther

Graduation Day – Uganda

Kenneth Kasule, Grace Lutheran Church Uganda Orphan Project Coordinator, sent a message to Sharon Dembro announcing the graduation of Moreen Nakayiza and Lilian Nabulime from Muteesa I Royal University. He also included photos of the girls taken during the event. In addition, Kenneth forwarded a letter from Lilian to Jan Schroeder, her sponsor.

Dear Sharon and the entire congregation of Grace,

I am so delighted once again to share my greetings with you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As I informed you earlier, today is the day both Lilian Nabulime and Moreen Nakayiza graduated at Muteesa I Royal University. Lilian graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Mass Communication, and Moreen graduated with a diploma in Secondary Education. As always, thank you so much for all your support.

Kenneth

Jan, let me take this opportunity to let you know that I am graduating February 27 with a degree in mass communication. All thanks go to you for the big role you have played for this to happen.

I also thank the almighty God for good health, knowledge and providence. How I wish you were going to be right here with me, but all in all, I thank you so much; may God bless the works of hands.

I love you so much, Lilian

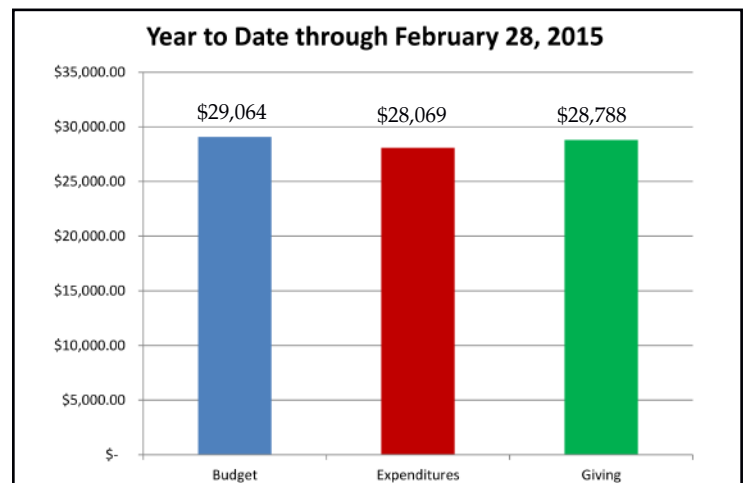


Lilian Nabulime enjoys her special day as a graduate!



Moreen Nakayiza is all smiles on her graduation day!

Church Financials



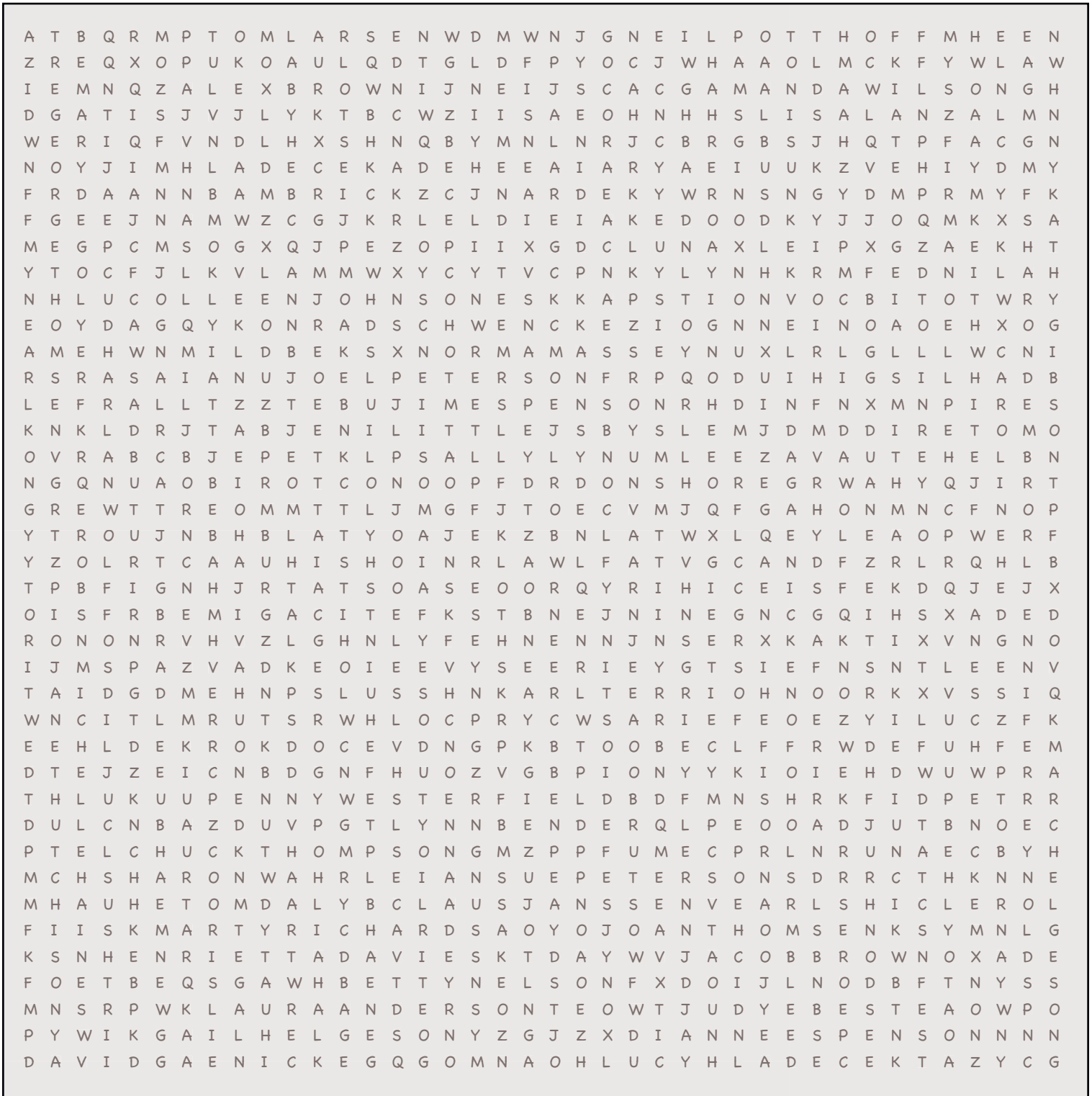
Dear Jan,

Happy and fruitful New Year 2015! Glory be to God for he saw us through the previous year 2014. I hope you and Steve are doing well plus the entire Grace Lutheran church membership. I had a wonderful Christmas day with my sister and her family, and we also celebrated the new year together.

Jan, in Uganda we have been experiencing a dry season; it has been so sunny that all plants dried, and it's so dusty that you cannot escape influenza and cough. But by the grace of God we have started receiving rain.

82 Name Word Finder

Hidden in this puzzle are the names of 82 members of Grace Lutheran Church. Circle as many as you can. Share the total number of names you find with the editor. The person who finds the most names will win a special Word Finder book. In event of a tie the winner will be determined by a coin toss. Offer ends on Saturday, April 18.



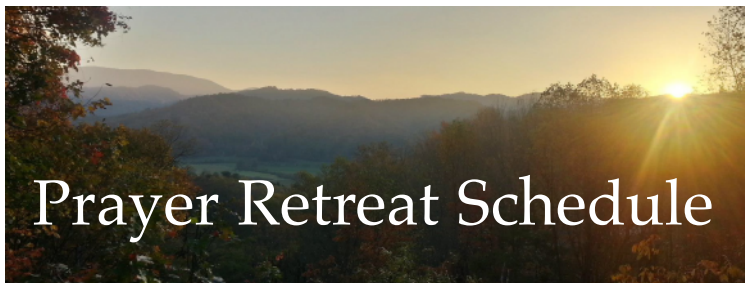
Announcements: Update Your Calendar



Grace Lutheran Church council set June 28 as the date for the next congregational meeting. Please mark your calendars. The agenda will include elections of a congregation treasurer, social concerns minister, and president as well as discussion of the use of the initial proceeds from the mineral rights. The council accepted volunteers to serve on the committee to make recommendations for the distribution of the initial mineral rights funds.

Mineral Rights Update

At its March meeting, the council established the committee. Its members are: Linda Wolff, Jane Schwencke, Tom Larsen, Bob Haines, Neil Potthoff, Claus Janssen, and Jim Erickson. The council expects the committee to have recommendations ready for consideration by the congregation at the June 28 congregational meeting.



Due to the popularity of the Saturday morning prayer retreats, more dates have been set up through January 2016. Please mark your calendar with the following dates:

- June 13, 2015
- August 22, 2015
- October 24, 2015
- January 9, 2016

All retreats are scheduled from 9:00-noon. Participants regularly find these quiet retreats to be refreshing and invigorating and wonderful quiet time with our Lord. Please come and join us.



An after-church work party has been scheduled for Sunday, May 3. We will begin immediately after worship and stop for a pizza lunch around 2:30 or 3:00. Wear your work clothes to church. We always find that we get an amazing amount of work done on these days, and we have good fun and fellowship in the bargain. Please mark your calendar to participate.

Port Townsend Community Chorus Spring Concerts



Friday, April 17, and Saturday, April 18, at First Presbyterian Church in Port Townsend at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 19, at Chimacum High School at 2:00 p.m.

The chorus will be presenting a program of songs from the WWI and WWII eras. Suggested donation is \$15 at the door.

Several members from Grace are involved - Claus Janssen, David Gaenicke and Lisa Lanza.



Pastor's Message: *"Alleluia He is Risen!"*

In a recent adult forum, this question came up: "Why don't all denominations observe Lent, and why do Lutherans?" It's a good question. Lent is a 40-day season in the liturgical year observed by most liturgical churches. A liturgical church is one which observes the

different liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Pentecost, Trinity, and Ordinary Time). Liturgical churches also have an order of worship that is relatively constant and includes confession and absolution, scripture readings, preaching, prayers, creed, perhaps Holy Communion and benediction. Non-liturgical churches will worship primarily with preaching and singing but do not generally observe the seasons of the church year.

The observation of Lent started in the ancient Roman Catholic Church; it was a time of fasting and preparation leading up to Easter. Many people were baptized and confirmed on Easter, and Lent was a time of preparation for these celebrations. In many congregations this is still true.

In the adult forum, one person pointed out that Lent helps us appreciate Easter. Lent is a time of somber music and readings that remind us of how we sin and fall short of God's hopes for us. This time of solemn examination of our lives helps us realize what a great gift we have received in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lent is what all of life would be like without Jesus! This is especially brought home to many of us when we strip the altar at the end of the Maundy Thursday worship. That can be a very powerful worship service as we watch everything that reminds us of God's love removed from the sanctuary. Our sanctuary seems to change from a bright and holy place to an empty shell that has been abandoned by God. It doesn't feel very good.

At our Good Friday worship, we enter that empty place and pray for light. Then, at Easter vigil, halfway through the service, Easter BEGINS! We hear the great words that have not been heard for 40 days: "Alleluia, Christ is Risen!" The lights go up, the altar is reset, and it is as though we, ourselves, have risen from the grave. What joy! What celebration! What love the Father has poured out upon us.

Lent does help make Easter extra special. The recognition of our own sin and brokenness deepens our appreciation of God's forgiveness and love. So, as we approach this coming Holy Week and Easter, come and participate in all the services so that you will get the full experience. It is worth it. It is powerful. It is God's love experienced! A powerful Holy Week and blessed Easter to you all.

*God Bless,
Pastor Coe*

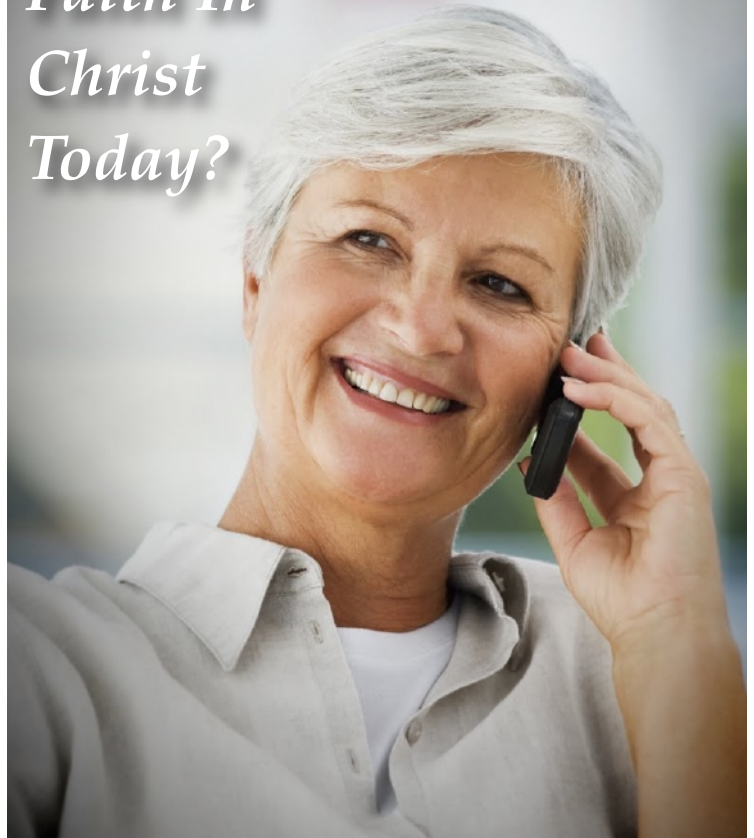
World Tour: *Voice of Grace*

Betty Oakes and Penny Westerfield enjoyed a magical adventure at Disneyland in Southern California. While there, they shared a copy of the *Voice of Grace* with none-other-than Minnie Mouse.

Wherever your adventures take you, take along a copy of the *Voice of Grace* so we can record your travels.



Have You Shared Your Faith In Christ Today?



Church Mice

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