

The Pipeliner
of
Grace Lutheran Church
422 Valhi Blvd.
Houma, LA 70360
Pastor Rich Rudnik
Phone: 985-879-1865
Fax: 985-879-1833
Email:
secretary@gracehouma.org
Web Page:
<http://www.gracehouma.org/>



Pastor's corner:

"End of the Exile"

Following the 70-year Babylonian captivity of Israel only a very small number of Jews opted to return to Judah and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The majority of Jews had grown accustomed to lives in Babylon. Remember, the Jews were not slaves there. They had become active and prosperous members of Babylonian society. Though they were free to resume life as God's chosen people in the Promised Land, they opted for the life and routine they'd come to know in a foreign land.

I fear something similar has happened to many practicing Christians during this time of the Covid Pandemic. Folks were exiled to isolation in their homes, worshiping from afar via the Facebook livestream of worship services, unable to gather together around the altar and receive the body and blood of Christ in His Holy Supper. But now the exile has ended. The vaccine is plentiful. The treatments for those infected are quite effective. With few critical health exceptions there just simply isn't any appreciable risk in coming to worship services. And even those who perceive a risk can mitigate and still attend.

It is important to gather for worship. Today's Christian culture pushes the personal relationship just-me-and-Jesus understanding of faith; that's not the picture Holy Scripture paints. Israel was always God's people, not God's person. Jesus said of Peter's proclamation, "*on this rock I will build my church.*" "Church" means "gathering". In the Book of Acts Christians always gathered together around the Word and Sacraments and St. Paul makes clear that believers are in a union with one another that is lived out by coming together around the Means of Grace. (See Hebrews 10:24-25, Colossians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Acts 2:42,46, Matthew 18:20, Psalm 50:5)

Without a doubt the Facebook livestream and using Zoom for Bible studies and meetings has been a blessing here at Grace. We've reached far and wide and fed people with the Word of God when the world kept us apart. But the barrier has fallen. The exile is ended. While I have no intention of ending virtual worship, it's time for those who are able to come and gather with your brothers and sisters in Christ around His presence to receive His gifts and rejoice together. This is not only what is best for you, but you are needed by the church. Your presence is a witness of faith that build up others, and we are at a loss without you.

I was hesitant to write this, fearing I may be treading on the sacred ground of people's personal health choices. But the truth I see before my own eyes is that God has blessed us with medicines and treatments that have mitigated the threat of Covid and I'm pretty comfortable now with calling my brothers and sisters to gather once again in God's house.

"I was glad when she said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'"

On a completely unrelated note, I'm conducting an experiment to see how many folks actually read my Pipeliner articles. If you've read this piece, please drop me a note, email, text or just say to me, "Jeremiah was a bullfrog". I'd appreciate it.

—Pastor Rich

Lectionary Readings:

December 5, 2021—Second Sunday in Advent (Blue)
Malachi 3:1-7b, Philippians 1:2-11, Luke 3:1-14

December 12, 2021—Third Sunday in Advent (Blue)
Zephaniah 3:14-20, Philippians 4:4-7, Luke 7:18-28

December 19, 2021—Fourth Sunday in Advent (Blue)
Micah 5:2-5a, Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45

December 26, 2021—First Sunday After Christmas (White)
Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15, Colossians 3:12-17, Luke 2:22-40

2021 Board of Directors

President: Brandy Lirette
Vice-President: Jerrie Fitzgerald
Board Secretary: Bridgette Rudnik
Financial Secretary: Bonnie Dupre
Treasurer: Lisa Giroir
Activities Chair: Open
Christian Ed. Chair: Open
Social Ministry Chair: Open
Stewardship Chair: Kim Cape
Property Chair: Dale Boger
Mission Outreach Chair: Open

2022 Board of Directors And Elders

Now is the time to start thinking about serving as a member of the Board of Directors or elder for 2022. Don't be afraid to nominate yourself. Grace needs you! Currently all positions are open for nominations. Please prayerfully consider how you can help the Lord's work by volunteering to serve as a candidate for an elected position.

2021 Elders

Derek Crawford, Joey Souther, John Wegner and Joe Deane

January 2022 Newsletter articles should be turned in to Lisa by
Tuesday, December 21st. You may email these to secretary@gracehouma.org

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LCMS Stewardship Ministry
Newsletter article - December 2021

Lord Jesus Christ, the great physician of both body and soul, healed a man with dropsy by His Word on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1-6). Dropsy is a paradoxical ailment, with an unquenchable craving for drink even though the body is over inflated with fluid, a craving that, when indulged, served not to ease but to feed the disease.

And so, if a man drinks a great deal but is never filled, he sees a doctor to inquire about what ails him, what is wrong with his body, and how to remedy it. For that is not thirst but a disease (Seneca, *Consolation to His Mother Helvia*, 11.3).

But if the owner of five couches goes looking for 10, or the owner of 10 tables buys up as many again, and even though he has plenty of land and money, he remains unsatisfied and desires yet more, losing sleep and always in discontent, does he not also require a physician to diagnose the cause of this distress?

For this is not want or lack, it's a disease (Aristippus, quoted in Plutarch, *Love of Wealth*, 524b). As St. Augustine of Hippo wrote, "we may rightly compare the dropsical man to a covetous rich man: For the more the one is swollen with excess of water, the more he thirsts; so also the other: The more he abounds in riches ... the more eagerly he desires them" (*The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, 4:135). Both require physicians. Both require diagnosis and medicine applied from the outside to the inward being. For these are not desires to be fulfilled but diseases to be cured.

This is why our Lord instructs us to not to be consumed by money. "No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Our desire for money, like the disease dropsy, is never satisfied. We always desire more. We think, "If I just had this much then I would be happy."

But even when that much comes, which God gladly gives, happiness evades us. The desire for more is never satisfied. It demands our constant energy, either in procuring more or protecting what we already have. When this happens, God, in His mercy, shows us that the money that He has given is no longer serving us, but we it. We have another master.

To overcome this, we need a physician's diagnosis and a physician's remedy. And our Lord Jesus Christ, our great physician of both body and soul, applies His Word to us as He did to the man healed of dropsy. He shows us how we have put our fear, love, and trust in our money and not feared, loved, and trusted in Him above all things.

In essence, He says, "Stop chasing after these fleeting things. They are vanity. They are the things that moth and rust destroy. You cannot have two masters. Repent!" And in seeing our great error, we are sorry that we have not fully feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things. And, in the mercy and grace that He earned for us on the cross, He takes away this sin, restores us to health, and bids us to live.

But then what? What do we do with this healing balm and care that our great physician has given? Do we simply go back to our old ways? "By no means!" St. Paul says (Rom. 3:31; 6:2). We do not just go back to the old ways, the ways that lead us to death. No, we live a new life, a life filled with the grace, mercy and love of God toward us. And God's great mercy, grace, and love toward is so abundant that it overflows and pours out onto those around us.

So we no longer hoard money and possessions. We no longer scrape and crawl our way to amass more. We give to those around us, as God in Christ has given to us. We press our money and possessions into service for those who need it: our family, our society and our church. For money is God's gift to us to serve us and others. Not the other way around. It serves us because it is a gift from our Father in heaven.

- LCMS Stewardship Ministry
[lcms.org/stewardship](https://www.lcms.org/stewardship)

Time to Order Poinsettias

The Altar Guild is taking orders for poinsettias as we prepare our sanctuary for the celebration of our Savior's birth. The cost is \$10.00 per plant and these may be picked up after our Christmas Day service. Order forms are on the narthex table for your convenience.

Advent Worship Services
Wednesday, December 6 & 15
6:45 p.m. in sanctuary
(Potluck Fellowship at 6:00 p.m.)

Christmas Eve Candlelight
Worship
Friday, December 24th
7:00 p.m.

Christmas Day Worship Service
Saturday, December 25th
9:00 a.m.

In the palm of God's Hands...

HEALTH CONCERNS: Andrea Dupre, Angelo Michel, Belinda Thibodaux, Burt Hebert, Hunter Moore, Mary Deane, PC Cummins, Tina Williams & William Bruce Hillman Jr.

BATTLING CANCER: Cindy Gorham, Jay Cruse, John Adams, Karen Curtis, Nan Ashley Hebert, Penny Emling & Ursula Breaux

CHRONIC CONDITIONS & ELDERLY: Brian Hoover, Camile Adams, Cindy Deane, Connie Oswald, Edna Marie Sevin, Helen Hoover, Jackie Webb, Kim Cape, Lisa Ledet, Rana DaSilva Moise, Richard LaCour, Sue Ackett & Virginia Cunningham

MOURNING A LOSS: the family of Bobby Torbert, Gary Follis, Georgette Savoie, Raymond Labat & Timothy Bilello.

NEW & EXPECTING MOTHERS: Amye Jakob & Stephen Carl Jakob, Jacey Corbitt & Kai Dwayne, Kara Trahan & Sutton Paul and Lori Prugh & Calvin David Prugh.

SERVING IN OUR ARMED FORCES & THEIR FAMILY: Andrew Winn, Haily Crawford, Heather Darce, Jack Hansen, Kyle Turcott, Leo Lampinen, Matthew Spolarich, Natalie Turcott, Nigel Koorie, Todd Mueller, Tom Hemminger, Victoria Shroyer & Zhain Shroyer

COLLEGE STUDENTS: Adriana Vitrano, Annie Reaves, Armand Erhart, Blayne Barras, Brandon Cinnater, Brooks Thomas, Emma Thomas, Donovan Domangue, Fielden Baker, Gabbie Corbitt, Hannah Cuneo, Hannah Norman, Harleigh Dahl, Isabella Appenzeller, Jared Moise, Karly Kyzar, Madeleine Boudreaux, Peyton Kraus, Ross Reaves, Sophia Miller & Victoria Thalheim

Grace's Mission

**Building one body in Christ through Worship, Witness,
Stewardship, Service, Love, Teaching and Fellowship**

