

THE GLEANINGS

of Grace Lutheran Church



736 CAYUGA DRIVE, NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14304-3498
(716) 283-1843

OFFICE@GRACENF.ORG

REV. BENJAMIN G. BAHR, PASTOR

April / May 2019

OUR NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT RESULTS



We have now received the results from our first Natural Church Development (NCD) survey, taken by a sample of about 30 members representing a full cross-section of our congregation.

What does this survey measure? The numbers on this survey represent how the members of Grace perceive our church, as compared to thousands of other churches around the world, in eight quality characteristics shown to be shared by all growing churches.

What are the eight characteristics shared by all growing churches? The characteristics are: EMPOWERING leadership, GIFT-BASED ministry, PASSIONATE spirituality, EFFECTIVE structures, INSPIRING worship service, HOLISTIC small groups, NEED-ORIENTED evangelism, LOVING relationships.

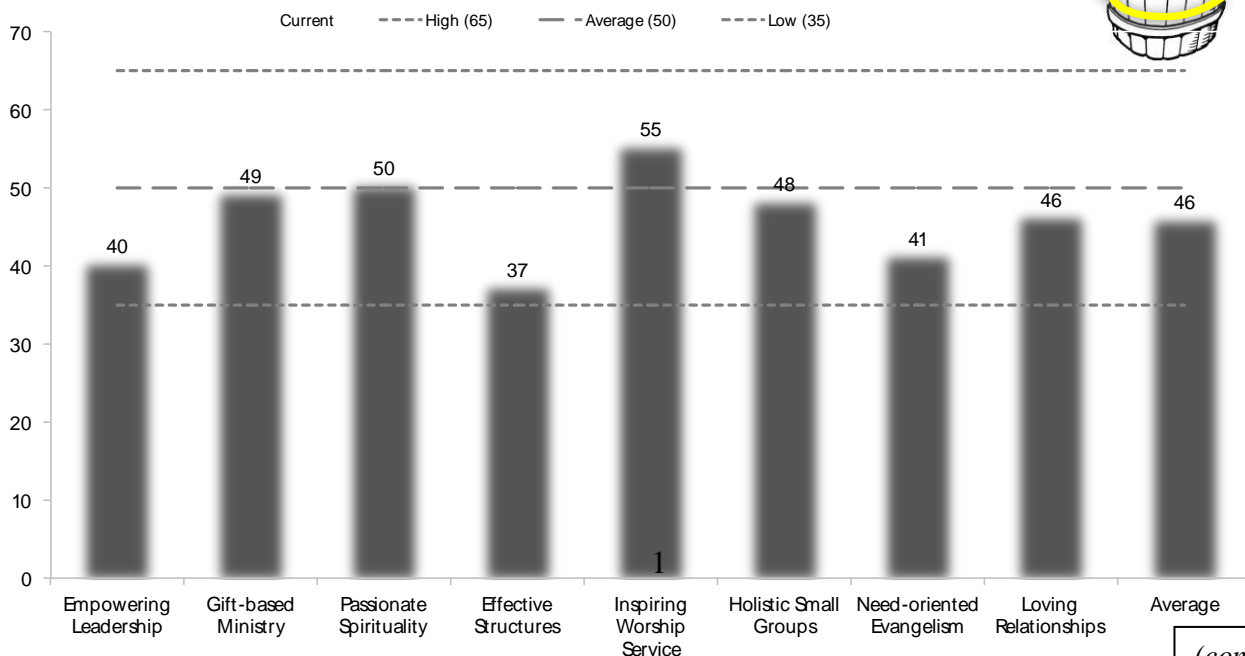
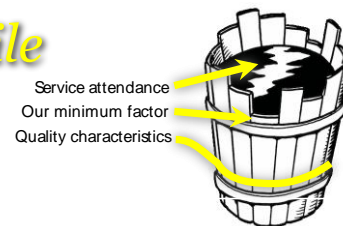
How did we do? On average, Grace scored a 46. This is actually a fairly high score for a church that has not yet gone through the process. We do have some things to be improved, but we are starting from a good place!

What was our highest/lowest area? Our highest score was a 55 in "INSPIRING worship service". Our lowest score was a 37 in "EFFECTIVE structures".



Natural Church Development *profile* of Grace Lutheran Church Niagara Falls

February-2019



(continued...)

What do these scores mean? Out of all the thousands of churches surveyed, 70% of them will score between a 35 and a 65 in each of these characteristics, with 50 being the average of all churches. The top 15% of all churches will score above 65 – these churches are likely to be experiencing steady natural growth. The bottom 15% of churches score below 35 – these are the churches likely to be declining rapidly. The remainder will likely have hit a plateau or have to work hard to bring in new people – and that, in fact, does describe where our congregation is. They may know something's not right, but be unable to put their finger on it – or try to fix the wrong things.

So, what are “EFFECTIVE structures”? EFFECTIVE structures include the organizational and governance structures of the congregation – everything from the Constitution & Bylaws to the goals/vision statements, from Council, Boards & Committees to building & grounds. EFFECTIVE structures measure whether the structures of the congregation help or hinder the ministry of the church. Note that this does NOT measure the leaders or their abilities, but only the structure in which they perform their tasks.

Why aren't our structures effective? That's what the NCD Task Force needs to figure out.

How are EFFECTIVE structures and EMPOWERING leadership related? EFFECTIVE structures are directly related with EMPOWERING leadership in that the leadership must act within the structure they are given. Ineffective structures may cause problems misinterpreted as poor leadership, when in fact, the leadership is hampered by the structure and cannot rise any higher. In such cases, one may see burnout among church leadership, a lack of understanding/training of the role of each office, and a lack of volunteers ready to replace currently serving officers. If structures are ineffective enough, they may simply be ignored altogether, with decisions made outside the governing structure and positions unfilled. As long as structures are ineffective, the best leaders and best training can't make a difference. See the barrel on the previous page?

I see the barrel. What's that? It's what NCD found to be true in their research. Like an old-fashioned stave barrel, the minimum factor limits the potential growth of the congregation. It doesn't matter how high the other staves are – the water will come out at the lowest one every time. In the same way, it doesn't matter how high the other quality characteristics are – the growth will be limited by the weakest one. That's why we need to address the lowest one first. This doesn't mean we don't look at the other characteristics – just that we prioritize our energy and concentration on the lowest one. This will yield the greatest long-range return on our investment.

How will we move forward now? Our survey results show that EFFECTIVE structures is our weakest characteristic with a score well below average, only 2 points higher than the bottom 15% of congregations. We have a NCD Task Force whose first task will be to come up with a plan for addressing EFFECTIVE structures. They will focus on that area first – not that the other areas aren't important, but that this one needs help first. It's important to note that the job of the NCD Task Force is to coordinate the church's effort, not to do the effort or to make the changes. It will take many of us working together to enact the needed changes in the right ways. The task force, with its big-picture approach, ensures all the pieces come together properly.

Who is the NCD Task Force? The NCD Task Force was established by the Board of Elders and its members currently are: Mark Andrews, Marla Crawford, John Loss, Robin Stephenson, and Pastor Bahr. Now that we have the survey results, we will be adding a few more people with passion in the area we need to improve.

Great. Let's move forward. Can we have this fixed by Easter? Uh, no. This is a marathon, not a sprint. It will take time to evaluate our structures, time to make the needed changes, and time to see the results, and there is sure to be a learning period while we adapt to whatever changes we make. We can expect 6-12 months before we take another survey to see how far we've come. However, we are starting immediately and building on momentum. The goal is in sight and we're running the race!

How do I find out more? How do I get involved? Great questions! Feel free to give Pastor Bahr a call. He's spent the last nine months studying this process so that he can help us through it. You can also speak with any of the members of the NCD Task Force, especially as they become familiar with the process as time goes on.

CAMP PIONEER & RETREAT CENTER NEWS



RETREAT INFO.

Friday, May 31st - 3:00 PM
to
Sunday, June 2nd - 10:00 AM

\$150 - Entire Weekend

\$50 - Saturday Only

* Consider Carpooling *



2019 MEN'S RETREAT

Hosted by: Pioneer Camp & Retreat Center
in partnership with the Lutheran Layman's League

FRIDAY MAY 31ST TO SUNDAY JUNE 2ND



"The Kind of Men the Church Needs" with Speaker: Joel Biermann

Aware of the challenges facing men who desire to be faithful, this retreat will concentrate on God's plan for men established at creation. Together we will explore God's Word, as it speaks to men about specific issues such as how to be masculine in a feminized world, what God expects of a Christian man, the role of men in their homes, and shaping the next generation. All men, married or unmarried, still raising children or not, will benefit from the learning and challenge offered during the retreat.

Pioneer Camp & Retreat Center will also be providing fun recreational opportunities including high ropes, paintball, laser tag, boating & more!

Contact Pioneer Camp & Retreat Center with questions (716)549-1420
And head to our website www.pioneercamp.org to register!



Mothers of Young Children Retreat

ANGOLA, NY. March 1st through 3rd, four mothers retreated to the icy, snow-covered shore of Lake Erie, and warmed themselves in a cabin found at Pioneer Camp and Retreat Center. There they rested through fellowship, Bible study, prayer, dining together, and sharing hobbies in the successful effort to rejuvenate for the duties which awaited them at home. Frequently the words "When can we do this again?" were heard among the strangers-become-friends, but by Sunday they were ready to return to their loved ones with the new-found strength that only God can so richly provide.

Thank you, Grace, for supporting this retreat. Ladies, be on watch for next year's Women's Retreat!



NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Social Ministries committee will be held after worship on May 19. A light lunch will be provided.

New members are always welcome!

FOGQUEST ...

Our annual Penny War will continue until Palm Sunday, April 14. Final totals will be announced on Easter, April 21. This year we are raising money to support the all-volunteer organization "FogQuest". This charity group travels to rural areas of developing countries and constructs specially designed nets that are able to condense the water found in fog and produce 50 gallons of clean water daily. They work in sparsely populated areas where wells are not practical because of the cost. (Wells can reach upwards of \$15,000 per well).

1800 CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE DIE EACH DAY

FROM A WATER RELATED ILLNESS

It is not too late to support our Penny War. You can donate to a Sunday School student for their banks or give to the Penny War jars located in the chapel and narthex. All money donated will go to the cost of the nets or to help support travel expenses for FogQuest's volunteer leaders. Thank you for supporting our annual Sunday School mission project.

UPDATES ...

Our January special mission envelopes resulted in being able to donate \$500 to support Young Life. In February, our mission envelopes enabled us to send \$675 to support Pastor Meissner's work as an LCMS missionary in Belize. In February we accepted donations of toilet tissue which resulted in the collection of 792 rolls for distribution by Heart, Love, and Soul food pantry in Niagara Falls. Thank you for your continued support of mission projects that help us to show God's love to those in need in our own neighborhoods as well as throughout the world.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:17

ONGOING MINISTRIES

Card Ministry: If you are aware of someone who could be cheered with a greeting card for a special need or a special occasion, please let Trish Andrews know by speaking with her or dropping a note in her mailbox. We are glad to send a card to anyone who could benefit from this ministry.

Old Eyeglasses and Hearing Aids can be donated to the collection box located on the glass case. These are given to the Lion's Club, which refurbishes them and distributes them in the United States and around the world to individuals that would not otherwise be able to see or hear.

Toiletry Samples that you may receive in the mail or from hotel visits can be placed in the collection box on the glass case. These are distributed by the Magdalene Project in Niagara Falls as they work with women in our city who are living on the streets and often resort to prostitution as a means of support. The Magdalene Project works to reassure them of the love Jesus has for them and helps them to rebuild their self-esteem as they plan new paths for their lives.

Social Ministries (continued)

LOOKING FORWARD . . .

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY AT THE MAGDALENE PROJECT: Volunteers from Grace are cooking and serving lunch at the Magdalene Project on Falls Street on the first Saturday of each month. The menu and food is provided by Magdalene, and all cooking is done on site with supervision as needed. If you would like to help cook or serve, please sign up for one or more Saturdays. Signup sheets are available on the glass case. Cooking begins at 9:30 AM and lunch is served at 11:30 AM. Feel free to talk with John Loss if you have questions about this opportunity.

APRIL SPECIAL MISSION ENVELOPES have been designated to support ORPHAN GRAIN TRAIN, a Christian volunteer network that offers aid to needy people in the United States and around the world. Since being founded in 1992, they have delivered more than 25 million meals and over 3000 shipments of clothing, food, and medical supplies to various states and 68 countries. Their volunteers have worked in several states to rebuild areas devastated by tornadoes and hurricanes. Since 1992, more than 3.7 million hours have been volunteered. Orphan Grain Train is a recognized service organization of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). If you would like to support Orphan Grain Train's loving response to those in need, please place your donation in your special mission envelope before the end of April.



LBW

LUTHERAN BRAILLE WORKERS

MAY SPECIAL MISSION ENVELOPES will support Lutheran Braille Workers (LBW). This organization provides large print Bibles, Braille Bibles, and audio cassettes to the visually impaired all over the world. They have worked in 160 different countries, including the United States. Recently, they have begun to address the need for large print Bibles in U.S. prisons. Their traditional volumes with plastic bindings did not meet prison security standards, so they have now developed a special Bible with a tape binding. It has become so popular that LBW is having difficulty keeping up with the demand—praise the Lord! If you wish to support this ministry to the visually impaired, please use your May special mission envelope and place it in the offering plate.

SUMMIT BABY BOTTLE BANK FUNDRAISER: Baby bottle banks will be available in the chapel and narthex from Mother's Day (May 12) until Father's Day (June 16) for those who would like to save their change to support Summit's annual fundraiser. We will also be accepting donations of diapers (size 1, 2, or 3), and baby toiletries. Summit is located on Pine Avenue near the City Market, and offers services to women and their partners experiencing crisis pregnancy situations. Pregnancy tests, sonograms, counseling, and parenting information is available free of charge. Clients earn points for every contact they have with Summit, and they then use the points to choose from a variety of baby care items and clothing at their onsite boutique. Your donations will support the ongoing work of these local Christian volunteers.

RECYCLING OPPORTUNITY COMING SOON: There will soon be a box available in the chapel for you to drop off laser toner cartridges and inkjet cartridges from your home and work computer printers for recycling. We will be helping the environment as well as earning cash back for certain items. Watch for more details in upcoming bulletins.



STUFFED ANIMALS: Are you spring cleaning and wondering what to do with those leftover stuffed animals from your child's younger years? Don't throw them out—recycle them. St. Pauly collection boxes will accept stuffed animal donations. There are three boxes near Grace, located at First United Methodist Church (8210 Buffalo Avenue), St. James United Methodist Church (4661 Porter Road), and Niagara Falls First Assembly of God (9750 Niagara Falls Boulevard).



Grace Lutheran Church

April 2019

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 APRIL FOOL'S 6:30P Survivors' Group	2 7:00P Confirmation Class 7:00P Diabetes Education Class	3 10:00A ABS 5:30P Simple Super 6:30P Worship 7:15P Choir Practice	4	5	6
7 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship (HC) Easter Flower Orders Due	8 6:30P Survivors' Group	9 7:00P Confirmation Class	10 10:00A ABS 5:30P Simple Super 6:30P Worship 7:15P Choir Practice	11 6:00P Elders Meeting 6:00P Pew Sisters 	12	13 9:00A Church Cleanup
14 PALM SUNDAY 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship SS Sings Start of Holy Week 	15 6:30P Survivors' Group	16	17 No ABS No Choir Practice	18 MAUNDY THURSDAY 6:30P Worship	19 GOOD FRIDAY 12:00P Prayer & Meditation Service 7:00P Tenebrae Service	20
21 EASTER 7:00A Sunrise Service 8:00A Breakfast 9:00A SS Easter Egg Hunt 9:00A ABS 10:30A Jubilee Service (HC) 	22 6:30P Survivors' Group	23 7:00P Grace Ladies Meeting	24 10:00A ABS 7:00P Choir Practice	25	26	27 9:00A American Red Cross Blood Drive  American Red Cross
28 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship 11:30A Coffee Fellowship	29 6:30P Survivors' Group	30			Head Ushers: Dick Crawford Mark Binkley	Altar Care: Ursula Zimmerman

SS: Sunday School
ABS: Adult Bible Study
HC: Holy Communion

6

Rev. Benjamin G. Bahr

Office Phone: 716-283-1843

Office Administrator: Denise Konopka – office@gracenf.org
Church Office Hours: Sunday 8:30 AM-12:30 PM; W-TH 8:30 AM-2:30 PM



Grace Lutheran Church

May 2019

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Head Ushers: Neil Stenzel Ron Schulz	Altar Care: Brenda Boyd Jane Hughes		1 No ABS	2	3 	4 9:00A Grace Ladies Flea Market & Bake Sale (till 3:00P) 1:00P Piano Recital Rehearsal
5 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship (HC)	6 6:30P Survivors' Group	7 7:00P Diabetes Education Class	8 No ABS	9	10	11 2:00P Piano Recital
12 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship	13 6:30P Survivors' Group	14	15 No ABS 7:00P Choir Practice Submission for Jun/Jul Gleanings Due	16	17	18
19 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship (HC) 11:30A Social Ministries	20 6:30P Survivors' Group	21 12:00P N.F. Board of Education Polling Place (till 9:00P)	22 10:00A ABS	23 6:30P Church Council Meeting	24	25
26 9:00A SS & ABS 10:30A Worship 11:30A Coffee Fellowship 2:00P Lewiston Choraleers Concert	27 6:30P Survivors' Group	28 7:00P Grace Ladies Mtg	29 10:00A ABS	30 5:30P Chicken Dinner 6:30P Ascension Day Service	31	

SS: Sunday School
 ABS: Adult Bible Study
 HC: Holy Communion

7

Rev. Benjamin G. Bahr

Office Phone: 716-283-1843

Office Administrator: Denise Konopka – office@gracenf.org
 Church Office Hours: Sunday 8:30 AM-12:30 PM; W-TH 8:30 AM-2:30 PM

Grace Lutheran

Sunday School NEWS

The following Sunday School students had faithful attendance during the months of December (D), January (J), and February (F). To be faithful in attendance, you may miss one Sunday during the month.

Daniel Bahr D, J, F
Alyvia Dixon D
Zakary Fees D
Marissa Majka D, J
Emily Markel D
Owen May D
Joey Mena D
Abram Smith D, F
Michael Bahr D, J, F

John Bahr D, J, F
Julia Dixon D, J
Alexis Majka D, J
Abigail Markel D
Haley Markel D
Sofia May D
Autumn Norton D, J
Stewart Smith D, F
Tyler Markel D, J, F

Dillon Deskovic D, F
Emma Fees D
Mariah Majka D, J
Audrey Markel D, J, F
Ava May D
Dominique Mena D
Zander Hoffman D



SUNDAY SCHOOL SUNDAY – On Sunday, March 24, all of our Sunday School students actively participated in worship. All Sunday School students sang during the 10:30AM service. Greeting and handing out bulletins in the chapel were: Ava, Owen, and Sofia May & Abigail, Louis, and Delaney Zimmerman. Greeting and handing out bulletins in the narthex were: Daniel Bahr and Audrey Markel. Acolytes were: Abby Markel and Emily Markel. Readers were: John Bahr and Marissa Majka. Ushers for the offering were: Alexis Majka, Julia Dixon, Dillon Deskovic and Stewart Smith. Sunday School offering was Autumn Norton. Thank you to our students and families for joining us in worship.

PALM SUNDAY – All Sunday School students are invited to process with palms on Sunday, April 14, at our 10:30 AM worship service. We will also be singing in this service.



EASTER SUNDAY - Along with a short Sunday School lesson and music, we will be having an Easter egg hunt. Come and join us on Sunday, April 21, at 9AM as we celebrate Jesus rising from the dead. **HE IS RISEN!!!!**
ALLELUIA!!!

(We also have an early service at 7AM, breakfast at 8AM, and worship at 10:30AM)

Two of our youth were recently recognized for completing the **Leadership for the Youth of Niagara Communities** (LYNC) program. This eight month leadership development program for youth emphasizes ethics, teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and diversity training. Congratulations to Matthew Kifer (Niagara Falls High School) and Abi Krull (Grand Island High School).

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH -- MISSOURI SYNOD
EASTERN DISTRICT
5111 Main Street
Williamsville, NY 14221-5295
Phone: 716-634-5111
Fax: 716-634-5452
Web Site: www.lcmsed.org



*"We desire healthy leaders
vigorously equipping God's
people for Kingdom growth."*

February 2019

Grace Lutheran Church
736 Cayuga Drive
Niagara Falls NY 14304

Dear Fellow Disciples in the Kingdom of God,

May the grace of God, shining in the face of Jesus, bring us confidence and hope in the mission we are privileged to share.

I am writing to you in light of the recent meeting of the Eastern District Board of Directors, where the 2019 District Budget was presented and passed. Budgets and finances are not the full story of ministry but, in my opinion, ministry cannot happen in the church without the Spirit's power in healthy stewardship. Consequently, while we have every reason to be full of hope because we are God's children, the challenges before us might lead us, at best, to a prompt prayerful pause. I hope, for the time it takes you to read this letter, you too will offer a prayer to God on behalf of your Eastern District.

Let me begin by saying that the Eastern District experienced a shortfall in receipts from congregations in 2018 in the amount of **\$56,000**. In other words, we expected to receive \$56,000 more from congregations for the work of the District. This was the largest single year deficit in revenues from congregations in the time I have been privileged to serve as your District President. Over the ten-year period from 2008 – 2018 alone, the income from congregations for District ministries has decline over **\$225,000**. And there is more to the tale, if you don't already know. Annual losses in revenue have been a struggle for your District for over two decades, back to the mid-1990s.

I and your staff continue to serve. It is our joy in Christ Jesus, understanding that our call is a heavenly calling that goes beyond our lot. And we will be here for as long as the Lord sees fit. Such is our commitment to you. The tone in the District office is positive.

At the same time, I also want you to know that adjustments have been made to the District budget that reflect our new-formed revenue projections for 2019. We will:

- Maintain the staff as it now stands. Salary to non-called workers was increased this year. They were frozen in 2018.
- Decrease the contribution to Synod (set at 10% of revenues received from our congregations)
- Decrease grant support to Pioneer from \$45,000 to \$13,000
- Decrease support to Hananiah from \$5,000 to \$1,000
- Reduce travel funds for staff
- Eliminate support to Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries
- Eliminate support to Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries

What can you do? That is a responsible and honest question. Let me begin by suggesting a few actions:

1. Have your congregation submit its Ministry Partnership Commitment pledge every November. We need more congregations that actually will do this. Right now, only 1 out of 3 congregations submits a signed pledge to the District. This makes it very difficult to set an accurate budget.
2. Pray for your Eastern District; for the excellent staff and the ministry we conduct on your behalf. A district is congregations walking together in faith and mission. Everything we do, we do on your behalf.
3. Support Pioneer Ministries directly. Pioneer is a place where amazing and unique ministry happens.
4. Consider supporting Hananiah (Buffalo), La Santa Cruz (Buffalo), PLM, PALM, Community Missions (Rochester) and Unity Lutheran (Pittsburgh) directly.
5. Continue sending in your support dollars to the Eastern District. Your donations go a long way in providing help from the outside to congregations and workers active in mission. To God be the glory.
6. Conduct healthy, Biblically-based and Gospel-centered stewardship sermons and campaigns in every congregation to renew our understanding of stewardship principles in maintaining all of God's resources for life and ministry.

Thank you for being there for us, for your understanding of the church that goes beyond your own church walls and for your passion for the Gospel of Jesus, our only Savior.

Now to God, who is able to do incredibly more than all we can ask or conceive by the Holy Spirit at work among us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forevermore. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Chris Wicher

Chris Wicher, President
Eastern District, LC—MS



DATES AT A GLANCE . . .

April 13 – 9:00 AM - Saturday – Church Clean Up

All are invited to participate in a church wide cleanup for Easter.
Plenty to do, inside and out! Bring your yard tools and cleaning rags.

April 23 – 7:00 PM – Tuesday - Meeting

Topic: Magdalene Project Speaker: Joanne Lorenzo
Hosted by – Ursula Zimmerman & Dorothy Kew

May 4 – 9:00 AM - Saturday – Flea Market & Bake Sale

Stop by Grace and stroll around the tables for new-found treasures!
This is a large fundraiser; any donations are greatly appreciated.
Donations may be placed in the Ladies Lounge (no clothing please).

May 28 – 7:00 PM – Tuesday - Meeting

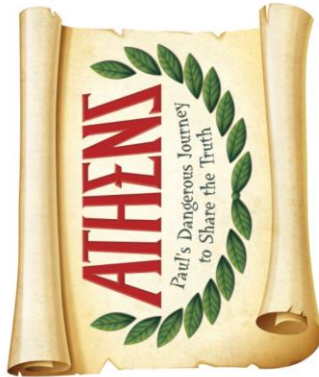
Topic: Summit Life Resources Speaker: Barbara Bidak
Hosted by – Joyce Learned & Lin Matiasz





VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

MONDAY, JULY 29TH – FRIDAY, AUGUST 2ND



Save the Date
Athens Bible Adventure
July 29-August 2
6 PM—8 PM
Registration coming soon!

Meet Paul and hear of his amazing journeys over
land and sea!

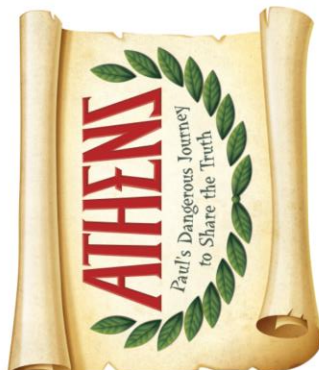
Visit the marketplace for activities and treats.

Large and small group meetings to learn more
about God's love.



FREE

Ages 3 (Potty-
trained) to entering
6th grade



Save the Date
Athens Bible Adventure
July 29-August 2
6 PM—8 PM
Registration coming soon!

Meet Paul and hear of his amazing journeys over
land and sea!

Visit the marketplace for activities and treats.

Large and small group meetings to learn more
about God's love.



FREE

Ages 3 (Potty-
trained) to entering
6th grade

REGISTRATION COMING SOON!

Grace Lutheran Church
736 Cayuga Drive
Niagara Falls, NY 14304-3498

Electronic Service Requested

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Niagara Falls, NY
Permit No. 419



Upcoming Events

WORSHIP SERVICES

Divine Service:
Sundays @ 10:30A

*Holy Communion on the
first, third and fifth Sundays

EDUCATION

Sunday School:
Sundays @ 9:00A

Adult Bible Study:
Sundays @ 9:00A
Wednesdays @ 10:00A

GRACE LADIES

Next Meeting:
April 13 @ 9:00A
Church Cleanup
April 23 @ 7:00P
The Magdalene Project
May 4 @ 9:00A
Flea Market & Bake Sale
May 28 @ 7:00P
Summit Life Resources

SOCIAL MINISTRIES

Next Meeting:
May 19 @ 11:30A
*New members are always
welcome. We meet five
times each year for about
an hour, and a light lunch is
included.

**Issue
10**

**Apr/May
2019**

Rev. Benjamin G. Bahr
Office Phone: 716-283-1843

Office Administrator: Denise Konopka – office@gracenf.org
Church Office Hours: Sunday 8:30 AM-12:30 PM; W-TH 8:30 AM-2:30 PM