“Let’s Challenge Ourselves”

by Pastor Saïd Ailabouni

Dear Friends,

With Lent falling early this year, Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will be on Valentine’s Day, February 14. What a wonderful coincidence to plan a “date” with God on that day, and every day throughout Lent! Imagine yourself sitting with God over dinner, in a fancy restaurant, having a wonderful conversation and celebrating God’s unconditional love for you and your grateful response to that love. How does that feel?

Lent is the springtime of the church year – a time when growth can take place in each one of us and in our relationship with God and other people. It is a time for us to intentionally reconnect with God, opening ourselves to be transformed by God’s power.

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During the forty days of Lent, it’s been a tradition for many of us to “give up” something we like to more closely focus our attention on God. This year, let’s give up more than chocolate... Let’s challenge ourselves to give up things that will help us to build a closer relationship with God.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Thursday, February 1
Healing in the Holy Land

Friday, February 2
International Potluck Dinner

Sunday, February 4
Annual Meeting & Lunch at Noon

Wednesday, February 14
Ash Wednesday Services 11:15am & 7pm
(Lenten Soup Lunch following 11:15 service)

Saturday, February 17
Lenten Retreat 8:30am-Noon

Sunday, February 18
Pancake Breakfast

Wednesdays, Feb. 21 & 28
Midweek Worship & Discussion Services
(Lenten Soup Lunch following 11:15 services.)

Thursday, February 22
Palestine Today  7pm

Saturday, February 24
Trivia Night  7pm
A sermon series for Sundays during Lent and Holy Week will focus on Giving Up: Control; Our Lives; Religion; Expectations; Power; Popularity; Status; Enemies, and Death.

During the weeks of Lent, we will be focusing on the “BIG GOD QUESTIONS” with opportunities to reflect on those questions with others online or in person during midweek services.

On Saturday morning, February 17, a Lenten retreat is planned to get you started on the right foot.

All are welcome to this journey with God which ultimately will lead us to the Cross-and the Empty Tomb.

Thanks be to God,
Pastor Said
Over 600 guests filled the hall in a small village of Bethlehem during the celebration of Bishop Younan’s 42 years of service to the ELCJHL (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jerusalem & Holy Land) as Youth Pastor, Pastor of 3 churches and as Bishop (20 years). Bishop Younan was honored by fellow Lutherans as well as international, ecumenical and interreligious leaders from around the world.

Bishop Younan has passionately worked toward peace, sharing his conviction that Jerusalem must be a shared place for three religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and two people (Israelis and Palestinians).

“When I was consecrated as a bishop, I had a dream that peace based on justice and reconciliation would come to this land during my tenure. Of course, this has not yet happened, to this day. But, I still carry this dream, and I still pray, and I still believe that the Holy Land will become a land of peace, justice, and security for all.”

In keeping with Bishop Younan’s longtime passion for gender justice, his wife was also recognized for her own international leadership working toward justice. Susan Johnson, Bishop of the Canadian ELC, emphasized how Bishop Younan insisted that the church in the Middle East value her role as a female leader of the church.

Bishop Younan honored guests at the event, thanking them for faithfully walking with him during his leadership as Bishop of ELCJHL.

“Bishops may retire according to the constitution of the church, but the call to serve the Gospel of Love cannot retire. I will continue to be a servant in whatever way God calls me next.”
Driven to Succeed

When they left their home outside Damascus, Bashar and his wife Thanieh and their children thought they would return home shortly, after things had settled down. They never imagined the violent conflict would last as long as it has. For two years, the family moved from place to place, watching the Syrian conflict deteriorate further. They realized that they could not go back home. Everything they knew there was gone.

Bashar and Thanieh thought constantly about their three young adult children and two younger ones. They worried about their educational opportunities and the stress they were experiencing. When an opportunity came to be resettled permanently in the U.S., it was difficult to imagine starting over in a new place, but they knew this move would give their children a chance.

“We were very scared,” Bashar says, “Everything was new and foreign to us.” But those fears were relieved as soon as they were greeted by their co-sponsors and RefugeeOne at O’Hare. “We’ve liked all the people we’ve met here. RefugeeOne and our co-sponsors let us know that we are not alone and that our future is bright.” “My goal in the last few years was simply to keep my family together,” Bashar says. “We lost everything we had in Syria, but that didn’t matter because we were all alive and together.” Now that they are safely in the U.S., he hopes his children can move past the difficulties of the last few years and focus on pursuing their dreams. They’re already well on their way.

In the first few weeks of the family’s arrival, RefugeeOne enrolled the parents and young adults in English classes and assisted in their search for employment. With immense courage and resilience, refugees like Bashar, Thanieh, and their children are determined to build a new life for themselves—proving that those who are driven from their homes are driven to succeed.

Totally Rad Trivia Night

Saturday, February 24
7:00 pm
$50 per person benefits

Genesis Mission Trip 2018

- Teams of up to 6 players
- BYOB event, 21+ only please
- Register www.gracelg.org
- For more information contact Keith at k.vedmore@gracelg.org

2018 VBS
August 6 - 10

When you worry, Jesus rescues you!
Registration opens April 9

Refugee Sponsorship Drive
February 25-March 11
Fellowship Hall

Please join Grace volunteers as they work to give a family in need a better life!

Through the RefugeeOne co-sponsor program, Grace volunteers will furnish an apartment and raise funds for the refugees’ first months in Chicago. Visit the Refugee table for a list of the items needed. Your financial donations will help cover the costs of rent, utilities, food and more during the Refugee family’s transition.
**God’s Global Barnyard**

Lenten Offering

An animal can make a world of difference for a family in need. Animals provide food to eat, fertilizer to grow crops and offspring to sell. Grace Place families will reach out this Lent to help end the cycle of hunger and poverty. Join us in making a difference. Contact Rebecca Simms at r.simms@gracelg.org for more information.

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**Grace Preschool**

Registration for the 2018-19 school year is open. For more information regarding registration or Grace Preschool happenings, contact director Heather Grant at h.grant@gracelg.org.

**Summer Employment:** The Preschool is accepting applications for summer employment. Do you know a college student that would love working with children?

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**Lenten Bake Sale**

February 25

8:30-Noon

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**Sunday Mornings**

Preschool 3 – 6th Grade

9:30 & 11:00 am

God’s Love is great and that is all we need!

**Grace Place Kids 1st-6th Grade**

**KINDNESS:** Showing others they are valuable by how you treat them. Jesus didn’t just model kindness. He commanded it. By treating others the way we want to be treated, we live out the way Jesus taught us to live.

**Grace Place Kids Preschool & Kindergarten**

Jesus LOVES everyone!

Get your sweet tooth - and your heart - ready for a super sweet month filled with the good news that JESUS LOVES EVERYONE! It's going to be one, huge, sugar overload; not because of candy but because Jesus' love is just that big and sweet!

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**Mission Trip 2018**

Breckenridge, MN

July 21-28, 2018

Have you registered your teen for this life-transforming experience?

Join us Sunday, February 18th at 10:30am in Grace Café to learn more or contact Keith at k.vedmore@gracelg.org.

Online registration is now open!
150 Years of Transforming Lives

On October 31, 1867, the doors of a new orphanage opened to receive its first ward. When Edward crossed the threshold, that small step marked the beginning of a long history of service to people and communities across Illinois. In 1871, the children moved to nearby Andover Children’s Home, the first Lutheran charitable institution in the state and one of the earliest in the country.

“Throughout our history, we have been known as ‘Lutheran,’ a steadfast presence in people’s lives,” said Mark Stutrud, President and CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI). “We are privileged to share in life in ways that bring love, support, and transformation.” Homes for children orphaned expanded to help dependent, abused and/ or neglected children. Lutherans in Illinois continued to respond to needs in the community. The services branched out from children’s welfare into care for older adults. Over the years, strength by combining efforts of the many church-based programs.

LSSI, now one of the largest statewide providers of social services in Illinois, serves more than 64,000 people annually across the spectrum of age, race, income, and wellness.

Palestine Today
February 22 • 7:00 pm
Dr. Paul Parker

Dr. Paul Parker has spent his career studying the religious and political dynamics of Israel and Palestine. Dr. Paul Parker, Elmhurst College Department of Religious Studies Chair, has focused his career studying the religious and political dynamics of Israel and Palestine. The evening will be focused on helping us to understand the divisive and often confusing news headlines and to help each of us discover the connection we have to people in the Holy Land today. For more information contact Pastor Ben at b.sloss@gracelg.org
Pancake Breakfast
February 18
8:30-11:00 am
Proceeds benefit
Genesis Mission
Trip 2018

National Rebuilding Day
April 28, 2018
Preserving and revitalizing Chicago Homes and Neighborhoods
To date the National Rebuilding Day’s sponsor and volunteers have helped repair and renovate of 1,600 homes in Chicagoland!
Join us this April 28th as we reach out to strengthen the lives of the most vulnerable communities by providing low-income home-owners with critical home repairs, and accessibility modifications. Contact Karen Janik at k.janik@gracelg.org

OPUS
Older People Up To Something
For more information on monthly lunches, trips and activities please contact Alice Oscarson at a.oscarson@gracelg.org

OPUS Lunch Program
February 14 at 12:00 pm
Join us for the first of our Lenten Soup Lunches. If technology has you flummoxed, Pastor Ben will join us to answer your questions.
Lenten Soup lunches will follow all 11:15am worship services.

Just Lunch
Blueberry Hill • La Grange
Friday, February 16   12:30 pm

Movies on Monday
Hidden Figures
Monday, February 12
1:30 pm
Join us for popcorn and fellowship and the retelling of the little known facts surrounding the space race of the mid 19th century.

Friday, February 9 7:30 pm
Grace Lutheran Church
Taizé
Prayer & Music
This ecumenical worship allows us to step away from our busy lives, quiet our minds and listen for God’s voice.
Mission of Grace Lutheran Church

To celebrate in community God’s gifts through worship and education, inspiring us to be the heart, hands, feet and voice of Christ in the world.

Church Office Hours
Monday—Thursday
9:00-5:00pm
Fridays
9:00-3:00pm

Preschool Open
Weekdays
6:45am-6:15pm
708-352-0737

Visit www.gracelg.org, for additional staff information.