

May/June 2025

# THE VINE

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## *Pastor Kris' Chronicles*

### **New Look**

Welcome to the first ever edition of The Vine. This is the bimonthly newsletter for Grace, Bethlehem, and Zion Lutheran Churches and the Czech Presbyterian Church. I got a few submissions to be considered for the name of the newsletter – Virg Unverferth wins with The Vine. She suggested that because it is something that helps join us together. Props also to Tonya Brown for Pastor Kris' Chronicles for my section.

The logo is a ChatGPT generated one – I am certainly not wedded to it, so if you like creating logos and would like to take a shot at it, go for it.

My goal for The Vine is for it to be a way for each church to know a little bit more about the other 3 and what's going on there. This edition is focused on some of the ministries each of the congregations has as a way to serve in our communities.

For future editions, I hope to get some submissions from others to help us get to know each other better.

### **Shared Ministry Update**

The trial period for our shared ministry was set to go to the end of May. The combined leadership group will meet in May to assess and discuss any feedback we've received. I will meet with Synod staff earlier in May to help understand the different configurations this might take assuming we move forward. I will also attend the next session meeting at Czech Presbyterian.

From my standpoint the trial has gone very well. I've enjoyed preaching at what is for me two new congregations and getting to know you – all without having to leave Bethlehem and Zion. Everyone has been very welcoming, and I've greatly appreciated the great flexibility all of you have shown as we work our way through this. I especially loved the combined worship service on March 31 and was happy to see so many people there.

If you have feedback, please talk to me or one of your congregation leadership folks.

I believe the congregations will need to hold special meetings to vote on this once the combined leadership and respective church boards have put together the formal plan.

### **Choir**

Our next combined worship would be August 31. A suggestion was made that we get a choir together for those 5th Sunday services. There are enough singers among the congregations to make a great choir. Stay tuned for more information.

## ***How We Serve***

I've highlighted some of the biggest ministries of each church. It's not an exhaustive list and there are plenty of other more one-off service projects I could list. And there are likely things I don't know that happen at Grace and Czech Pres. But these will give you at least a glimpse.

### **Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Davey**

During the pandemic, Bethlehem installed a Little Free Pantry for folks in the community in need of food. During the summer a produce table was added for gardeners to share. This expanded to a permanent produce stand last year. It has been very popular.



Bethlehem's Women's Group meets usually on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at 10:30. They do various projects to brighten the days of people at various care centers. All are welcome. Talk to Pr. Kris and I'll get you Virg's number so you can get on the text chain.

Bethlehem also typically gets a group to volunteer at the Toyland event at Center for People in Lincoln.

Bethlehem also has scholarships available to cover the cost of kids connected to Bethlehem or the community of Davey to attend Carol Joy Holding Camp in Ashland.

Czech Presbyterian

The Czech church has a quilting group that meets every Monday from January through March. They start at 10, take a break for lunch and work into the afternoon. The quilts mostly go to People’s City Mission in Lincoln. Some go to the auction in Malmo to raise money for quilting supplies. This year’s total was around 60 quilts.



Grace Lutheran

In the fall, Grace hosts a harvest breakfast. A part of the morning is assembling school and health kits for Lutheran World Relief. These go to people in need all over the world.

Last fall, the confirmation students at Grace and Sunday school students at Zion did a collection of cold weather wear for Project Harmony in Omaha, a service for victims of abuse and neglect.

They also spent an afternoon volunteering at Saunders County Lost Pets in Wahoo.



## **Zion Lutheran Church**

Zion's big event of the year is the Pork BBQ on the third Sunday in August. A portion of the proceeds go to their monthly commitment to both the Saunders County Ministerial Food Pantry and the Saunders County Ministerial Emergency Fund. These funds provide food and housing assistance for people in need in Saunders County. The BBQ is also a great way to connect with our neighbors.

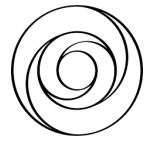


In addition, the Zion Sunday School class does at least 2 or 3 service projects each year and invites the congregation to help collect items for various missions. In May they will participate at the spring Work Day at Camp Carol Joy Holling.

## **Liberty House Worship—Pastor Kris**

One of the things I do is lead worship at Liberty House in Wahoo once a month. The service is at 1:30 pm on the 4th Monday. Liberty House is a supportive care facility for low income people who need a supported care environment due to physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, and mental illness. I always feel the presence of the Spirit there pretty strongly. Anyone who would like to join us is welcome. Talk to me if you want more info. A group from Bethlehem and Zion joined us for Christmas worship.





## Seeking the Spirit—by Virg Unverferth

### Awareness of Breath

Breathing is essential to our lives. Normal respirations or breaths per minute for adults are 12-20, but faster for babies where normal is 30-60 breaths per minute. Most of that breathing is done without us even thinking about it. We will breathe faster when more active and slower when resting or sleeping. We will breathe faster when sick or experiencing emotions such as anger or anxiety.

Awareness of breath is a well established way to regain control over a situation we are in. If someone is hyperventilating or “spinning” out of control when anxious, scared, or in pain, we will ask them to focus on us and to slow their breathing.

God gives us the breath of life. God breathed into Adam and gave him life. Breath sustains us moment to moment and can be a constant reminder that the Spirit is in us, through us and goes out from us. Breathing practices are integral when trying to connect deeper with God in silence and solitude, but they take practice.

- \*Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor, hands on your lap and eyes closed.
- \*Begin by focusing on your breath, breathing in and out, expanding the chest and releasing fully
- \*As you continue to breathe, become aware of any tightness in your body and relax into those areas.
- \*Focus on God’s presence, filling your mind, heart, and soul as you continue to breathe in God’s love and grace in your life.

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Virg Unverferth is involved in the Seeking the Spirit Within through the Nebraska Synod of the ELCA. She is participating in a three year course to become a spiritual director. Spiritual Directors meet with folks to help them discern the Holy Spirit’s presence and call within them. She offers these each newsletter to help you connect with the Spirit in and around you.

## Regular Sunday Worship Times

Bethlehem Lutheran—10:30 am—communion first and third Sundays

Czech Presbyterian—10:30 am (There will most likely be no worship on the third Sundays from June—August. Decision will be made at Session meeting May 25)

Grace Lutheran—9:00 am—communion second and fourth Sundays September—May; second only June through August

Zion Lutheran—9:00 am—communion first Sundays

Pastor Kris preaches at Bethlehem and Zion the first and third Sundays and Grace and Czech Presbyterian the second and fourth Sundays. Fifth Sundays are a joint worship.

## Church School

Zion Lutheran every other Wednesday at 7 pm for grades K-6

## Important information

Pastor Kris: phone 402-499-4993; krisbo90@gmail.com

Online worship info:

Bethlehem Facebook livestream

<https://www.facebook.com/bethlehemdavey>

Zion Facebook livestream

<https://www.facebook.com/ZionIthaca>

I also usually record Grace's service and upload it to Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/gracelutheranwahoo>

Bethlehem and Zion have had YouTube channels but we've struggled to get those to work. All the Facebook pages are public so you should be able to watch the videos without a Facebook account.

At the present time, Grace, Bethlehem, and Zion all have websites. We will likely condense to one website for all four congregations assuming this arrangement becomes permanent

Bethlehem and Zion councils typically meet the third Sunday of the month, Zion at 8 and Bethlehem after worship

I'm still figuring out Grace and Czech Pres leadership meetings.

## Newsletter submissions

Newsletters will be bimonthly and I try to have them ready by the first of the month. **I would encourage you to submit items for the newsletter—events, thoughts, pictures, and so on.**

For next time, I'll be asking some of those who have been preaching to share a little of their experience. And if you are interested in being a lay preacher and/or worship leader, please let me know.