

Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Honor Your Father

Any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter may be sent to **secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net**, or put in the tray on the secretary's desk.



Missions Corner

George and Norine Carnevale

Prayer Update June 2014

George is continuing with the dining hall roof project, that is on hold waiting for the volunteers to arrive. Also he has to price out all the upcoming projects for the next budget season. This means projecting the costs so that the budget will cover everything, and proposing and prioritizing what is to be done. He is busy preparing jobs for the upcoming projects as well so that he will have a plan and can give out work to the volunteers as they arrive in the fall. It is just as important to keep everyone busy and feeling like they are contributing and using their skills and know how as it is to get the projects completed in a timely manner. These preparations can be stressful, so pray that he will keep his eyes on Jesus as he makes these plans knowing that no matter how much we plan, the final results are in the hands of our Father God.

Pray for my mom, at age 96 doing well, but she has been sick with bronchitis. Pray that the persistent cough will calm down and quit! She is feeling much better than last week, but the cough wants to hang on.

Pray also that the Lord will raise up a strong support team for our daughter, Julie and her husband, Rudy, as they continue to seek prayer and financial supporters for their mission to Berlin where they feel the Lord has called them to share the Gospel with the Turkish Muslims who have been an unpopular minority population there for three generations. They are encouraged how the Lord has been leading them. They are at 50%! Praise Him for His plans are perfect! Pray for them to hear His voice and recognize His will. They are heading for training with YWAM in September for 6 months. Rudy will officially end his job the end of June. This is a scary time for them to actually have no income. They have been budgeting and saving and have things in place to live until they will begin to live on their faith support income. This is a big step of faith for them.

Also, please ask the Lord to send a much needed handy man to be a permanent member of the staff at the Cowan Retirement Apts, here on the Wycliffe Center. There are 50 apt units in this building and lots of work for one man to be busy helping the residents with their personal issues.

Pray for the Bible Translation Project in South Africa called Words with Hands, creating a visual Bible for the deaf. This project is the one I have chosen to send my business profits to this year. So I need to be wise as I seek to generate sales that will be profitable for this ministry. This is also a big faith venture for me! I have become a Norwex sales consultant in order to be able to send funds to various Bible Translation projects around the world.

We thank everyone for their prayers! We could not do this without your loving intercession!

Norine and George (with Wycliffe Associates in Dallas, Texas)



From the Pastor's Desk

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,... (Matthew 28:19)

Most of you know that on the last Sunday of June Grace Church will be hosting a memorial service for Ardys Soules. Frank and Ardy (as most people knew her) served Grace Church from 1974 to 1984. Prior to their coming to Pittsfield they had served as missionaries to Brazil with the Presbyterian Church for seventeen years. Frank finished his ministry at Grace in December of 1984 and they began working as missionaries again, only this time here in the US, with International Students Incorporated (ISI) in New York City. About a year later, Frank was diagnosed with a brain tumor and went home to be with the Lord in 1986. He spent his last few months convalescing in Pittsfield and is buried here. Ardy continued on with ISI after Frank's death in the Chattanooga area even up until fairly recently.

Anyone who knew Frank, knew that his strength and passion for ministry was discipleship, particularly discipling younger men in whom he intentionally invested time. It's what he did in Brazil, and it was his vision in Pittsfield, and I'm sure it would have been his focus with ISI if he had lived long enough. There were a number of young men, primarily in their 20's at Grace Church in the 1970's and early 80's who were recipients of his ministry, myself included.

With Ardy's memorial service we see once again a shift in generations. Frank and Ardy's daughter and son-in-law will be here for the service along with all of Shelley's siblings as well as others whose lives have been impacted by their ministry. Dieter and Shelly have been serving the Lord in Japan for some 25 years now.

Last Sunday we celebrated the wedding of a young couple here at Grace Church- Emily Graham and Brian Coughlin- both in their 20's and believers in Christ. Emily and my daughter, Rachel, have been friends since they were not much more than toddlers. (Rachel even flew out from Nevada to attend the wedding) It was a gorgeous, sunny June day, and reminded me of a similar day thirty eight years ago when Charleen and I got married here too. Like Emily and Brian, we had a picnic on the lawn of the church for our reception, only we didn't have a tent or a DJ. Charleen has had an ongoing relationship with Emily for the past few years (yes, discipling), and even refers to Emily as her "other daughter". I don't know Brian well enough to have that level of relationship with him.

I was mentioning to Charleen the other day that in one more year I will have served Grace Church as Pastor for twice as long as any previous Pastor of Grace Church. That thought is absolutely staggering to me. Frank was here for 10 years. A few weeks will mark 19 for me. Who would have ever thought? I also realize that I am exactly the same age now that both my dad and my father-in-law were when they retired from GE. (63) I really don't intend to retire soon. I guess I'm hoping to get another 10 years, unless, of course, Grace Church decides it's in the best interest of the church to have someone younger- of the next generation. Really, I'd like to keep on serving the Lord in some capacity as long as I have the energy.

Do you get the picture?

I believe we have two besetting problems in the Western church; really I think it is endemic to all of Christendom, but is especially pronounced in the American church. One is that we tend to think in terms of immediate success. We are "Now" oriented. The other is that we place an undue amount of reliance on humanly manufactured programs in order to accomplish that success. In doing so, we by-pass the real and often harder work of ministry. The work of the church is people, with all their weaknesses and immaturities. Isn't that what discipleship is all about? I know it was in my case.

But what about us, now? What about the next generation of Grace Church? What about the younger generation that the Lord brings our way? I trust that our burden is: what contribution can I make in the life of some young person to prepare them for a life of service for Christ and his church?



Pastor Tom Bridgman

Miss Memphis

by Ian Bridgman

We called her Miss Memphis because we hadn't yet learned her real name. She had shown up at the motel a couple of nights earlier, parking her car in the handicap spot right in front of our door. It wasn't every day that we had young ladies all but land on our door step, so my roommate and I stepped outside to survey. She looked to be about our age, brown skin, straightened black hair; quite pretty, but in a rough sort of way, and covered in tattoos, from the side of her face down to the tops of her feet. She finished selecting a few articles of clothing from the one small suitcase in the trunk of the car, and started to walk past us. We couldn't just silently watch like a couple of creeps and I knew I had to say something before my tipsy roommate said anything foolish, so I asked her where she was coming from. She said Tennessee. She had the same distinct accent as some of the other guys on the crew, and I guessed right away that she was from Memphis. I was right. What brought her to New Orleans?

"Work," she said. "I'm a dancer."

They always referred to themselves as 'dancers'. Almost all of the women at this motel seemed to be in the same occupation. Of course, they were not in town for a New Orleans Ballet Convention. Every night, usually around 11, they would hop into a car or a taxi and head for one of the many "Gentleman's Clubs". Often times, the destination is somewhere on Bourbon St., but there are plenty others littered across the rest of the city.

Over the next few days, I traded a few "Good Morning's" and other cursory phrases with Miss Memphis, usually because she often came back just after sunrise, when the rest of the crew and I were getting ready to leave for the day, and she always parked in that same spot right in front of the door. One evening, as my roommate and I were holding court outside our door, she pulled into her usual spot and climbed out toting an armful of groceries. Partially to be polite, and probably also just to one-up my roommate, I offered to carry some of the bags. On the way up to her perch above us, on the third floor, I learned a little more about Miss Memphis.

She had started 'dancing' six years ago, at age 18. She worked primarily for just one line of clubs, and traveled all over the country for them; New Orleans, California, even Hawaii. From what I could tell, she made good money, and considered herself one of the fortunate ones in her trade. She wanted to know if I had brothers and sisters, and noted that she and my younger sister were the same age. I cringed inwardly at the thought of my own sister being caught up in that line of work.

As the stairs opened out into the balcony outside her door, she handed me a bag of Cheetos and a small bag of ramen noodles. I was supposed to crush them up properly to help prepare her 'supper' while she lit up a cigarette. The conversation continued. She had lost a brother to murder a while back. She also had a child of her own, and was surprised, even taken aback, that I didn't have any children of my own. She was also surprised that despite my partial Jamaican heritage and poofy long hair, I had never touched weed or any other illegal drugs. Stereotypes die hard. But what got her attention the most, was finding out that my roommate and I had toured Bourbon St. the night before without ever stepping into any of the "Gentleman's Clubs". I guess we weren't quite gentlemanly enough for those places. Miss Memphis was probably starting to catch on.

"You ever dated a dancer before?" she asked. "Does what I do bother you?"

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I was relieved of having to give a truly thoughtful response when she saw the time, realized we had been chitchatting for a good 30 minutes already and it was time for her to start getting ready for her night's work. She thanked me for carrying the groceries and gave me a goodbye squeeze. She seemed genuinely happy to have had a bit of company. That was the last I saw of Miss Memphis. When our crew came back from work the next day, she was gone, headed for her next destination somewhere on the west coast.

I'm no psychology expert, nor am I a counselor of any form. I do know, though, that exotic dancing, as it's officially called, takes a serious toll on the women involved in the business, particularly on their ability to form normalized relationships. Other female coworkers may support each other on some level, but ultimately, they are competition for a client's attention, admiration, and money. Men are simply sources of income, protection, or in many cases, abuse. Sometimes, they are all three at the same time. As a protective instinct, these workers form very thick walls. The seductive smile and the engaging personality is all a show, while their real personalities remain buried deep below the surface, making any sort of real relationship almost impossible.

I also know that for someone like me to come along and get caught up a friendship with someone in that lifestyle would be a foolish mistake, even if there were only good intentions. Most likely, it would simply be unproductive, or worse, damaging to both parties. Sadly, a real relationship with these women, friendship or otherwise, is beyond the reach of most people. The good news is that we have a Heavenly Father for whom no one is out of reach. There are no walls he cannot breach, no heart he cannot heal, and no life he cannot transform. This is not just a Christian gloss to an otherwise sordid story; it is the reality of an all-powerful and awesome God. Miss Memphis and the hundreds of thousands of others like her don't need a prince charming; they need a personal relationship with the King of kings.

I'm not the best at consistently praying for specific people, although I'd like to think I'm getting better. My prayer warrior skills could probably use some further training. A lot of people came and went during my 4 months crisscrossing the country, but meeting Miss Memphis left an impression. I don't know what it's like to have a sibling get gunned down. I don't know what it's like to strip down, night after night, and have men, and plenty of women too, throw money at me based on my performance. God does. These trips exposed me to evil up close and in more detail than can go into a church newsletter, but I trust that God will use these experiences for his own purposes. What I am sure of is that Jesus loves Miss Memphis. And the drug dealer a few doors down. And the scrawny stung out addict knocking on that door. And the poofy haired pastor's son, whose own sins cost his Savior just as much blood as anybody else. I hope that I will be faithful in praying for Miss Memphis, that she will come to know God as her heavenly father, the God who *"loved the world so much, that he gave his one and only son, so that everyone who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).



A Story of Providence
Submitted by Bob Kirkman

"Yesu e'bu' 'ba woku!"
(Jesus doeth all things well!)

In February, 2012 the Rev. Nikolao Vuni, William Levi's uncle, summoned him from the Operation Nehe-miah compound in Borongole to his home in Juba. Upon a warm greeting Uncle Nikolao got up and went to his wooden bed and withdrew a package, wrapped in old burlap and string, and presented it to William, say-ing, "This is entrusted to you. You will know what to do with it."

In 1963, William's grandfather, Andrea Vuni, and an American missionary, Don Franseca, translated 46 hymns into the Madi language. They also translated the Gospel of John from English to Madi. In 1964 the Islamic persecution forced all western missionaries out of South Sudan.

Don and his wife Ruth left the country and never returned. Rev. Vuni died in 1990. Just before his death, he entrusted the hymns and the book of John to Nikolao for safekeeping, as the war was still raging.

Upon returning to the states in March, 2012, William located Don and Ruth Franseca, now in their 80's, and visited them in their missionary retirement home in Franklyn, TN. They wept as he presented them with the burlap package containing the hymns and the book of John that Don had translated 50 years ago.

Copies of The Madi Hymnals are now in the pews of the Beth Israel Congregation and copies of the Madi translation of the Book of John have been distributed throughout Eastern Equatoria. The legacy of the work of Rev. Vuni and Don Franseca has been preserved, and their dedication to the Great Commission during the time of persecution bears fruit for subsequent generations.

What a joy it was to return to Borongole in the fall of 2013 and hear the people enthusiastically singing "All the Way" upon our arrival!

God is indeed providential. Jesus truly doeth all things well.



GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Summer Schedule Reminder

We have moved to our summer schedule for worship as of June 8th. Morning **worship begins at 10:00 a.m.** Sunday School will resume in the fall.

Prayer Gatherings

All are encouraged to join us for our monthly prayer gathering as we seek God's guidance for our ministry in the community and His provision for the needs of our church. A time of corporate prayer will take place on **Sunday evening, June 22nd, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.**, in the sanctuary. The July Prayer Gathering will be on **Sunday, July 27th** at the same time and place.



Memorial Service

A memorial service for Ardys Soules, wife of our former pastor Rev. Frank Soules and mother of Shelley Schmidt, will be held at the church on **Sunday, June 29th, at 2:30 p.m.** A **graveside service will precede at 1:00 p.m.** at the Pittsfield Cemetery. Following the 2:30 service, a reception will be held at the home of Pastor Tom and Charleen Bridgman.

Men's Prayer Fellowship

Men of all ages are invited for a time of devotional, fellowship and prayer, on **Saturday, July 19th, from 7:00 -8:30 a.m.** The men are using *Whiter than Snow: Meditations on Sin and Mercy*, based on Psalm 51. Please call 443-2575 for the meeting place. Refreshments will be served.



Brazil World Cup Outreach

Ian Bridgman will be working with Operation Mobilization in Sao Paulo, Brazil from July 1-14. He would appreciate prayers for fruitful ministry during that time, and prayers for discernment, safety, and God's direction as he plans to remain in Brazil through August.





June/July 2014



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15 10:00 Worship	16	17	18	19 7:00 Addictions Victorious	20	21 7:00-8:30 Men's Prayer Fellowship
22 10:00 Worship 5:00 Prayer Gathering	23	24 7:00 Special Congregational Meeting	25	26 7:00 Addictions Victorious	27	28
29 10:00 Worship 2:30 Memorial Service for Ardys Soules	30	JULY 1	2	3 7:00 Addictions Victorious	4 	5
6 10:00 Worship	7	8	9	10 7:00 Addictions Victorious	11	12
13 10:00 Worship	14	15	16	17 7:00 Addictions Victorious	18	19 7:00-8:30 Men's Prayer Fellowship
20 10:00 Worship	21	22	23	24 7:00 Addictions Victorious	25	26
27 10:00 Worship 5:00 Prayer Gathering	28	29	30	31 7:00 Addictions Victorious		