



# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

*Volume XIII, Issue 7     September/October 2014*



Welcome to the September edition of the Grace Church newsletter. If you have any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter, please send them to [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net)





## From the Pastor's Desk

*...and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like the son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented to him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;... (Daniel 7:13-14)*

I shared with the congregation a couple of weeks ago that I will be going to China for two weeks next month. Charleen will remain here and hold down the fort in my absence, while I will travel with my brother, Phil. We will meet up with two uncles and at least one cousin in Beijing. The purpose of the trip is twofold: We will be attending the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of a school in Beijing, which was started by the widow of my Great-great-great uncle, Elijah Coleman Bridgman, the first American missionary to China who went to there in 1829. While the school has been under the control of the government for many years, it continues to this day providing an education for young ladies who are preparing to go on to university. The principal of the school has extended an invitation to anyone related to its founder to be a part of the festivities.

Secondly, as most of you know, my grandparents served in China as missionaries with the Southern Presbyterian Church from 1919 to 1948. My dad and his six siblings were born and brought up there. So we will be traveling down to Yancheng and Nanjing to visit the location of my grandparents' service. The plan is for us to fly out of Ottawa, Canada together with a two hour layover in Toronto and then non-stop flight to Beijing. (Apparently our flight will take us over the North Pole and across Siberia and Mongolia) After a few days in the Yancheng area, Phil and I will take the bullet train back to Beijing for a few days before flying back home. Interestingly enough, I have a former seminary classmate, a fellow CCCC pastor who serves the International Church in Beijing. We plan to worship with him the Sunday before we leave China.

Given my family history, I have had the desire to visit China for a long time but have wondered realistically if it would ever happen. My uncle first proposed the possibility a couple of years ago. I began to pray about it then, and God has seen fit to make it happen. As you might well imagine, this is a bit of a touchstone for me.

This trip is about more than just me and my desire to visit a foreign land though. It is also about Grace Church, or at least I would hope it is. Western Massachusetts is, of course, where we live and work and worship; Beijing is where my friends Mark and Dayna Blair live and work and worship, and north Jiangsu Province is where my grandparents lived and worked and worshipped for a season and where my dad grew up. It is our geographical location and culture that understandably occupies our attention. All that goes without saying. It is important that we give attention to the details of our calling as a local church where our feet are on the ground, but if in doing so we lose sight of the big picture of what Christ is doing elsewhere then our perception of what Christ is doing locally gets clouded. That may seem counter-intuitive, but I believe it is true.

A couple of weeks ago I preached on Acts 1. The new believers asked Jesus if he were at that time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel. Jesus didn't answer their question but told them they would be his witnesses at home in Jerusalem and throughout the world. Then he was lifted up and disappeared from view in the clouds. Daniel centuries before this event had a vision of Jesus descending in the clouds (as the angels had predicted at Jesus' ascension) at the culmination of Jesus' building his church.

When doing church on our local street corner, all the nuances of that ministry understandably take on a life of their own. It might be all the various programs and activities of each local congregation; it might be the friendships we forge within the fellowship or the personality conflicts we endure. It might be our unique style and expectations. These are things are common to all local churches no matter where they exist, China, America, Europe, Africa or Jerusalem. All the while Christ is building his Kingdom in China, America, Europe, Africa and Jerusalem. The big picture.

I suppose that this is in part why going to China is so important to me. I hope it can be for you too even though you remain here in Pittsfield. I promise to bring back some pictures.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



# Missions Corner

Schmidt Prayer Letter  
August 2014



## God gets pleasure in answering your prayers .

Daily we saw signs of God's love and care for us during our trip to America. In Japan, a couple in need of a temporary place to stay used our apartment, and covered for us at the Guest Home. In America, we had places to stay, the loan of a car and cell phone, generosity in many forms, safety on the roads, special times with friends, old and new. Our time with Shelley's siblings and also with Andrea, Rebekah and Kevin was a chance to make good memories. Plus, being able to go to the CCCC conference was a great encouragement. We feel so blessed. God answered your prayers. His gracious provision was amazing, with many of you being part of the answer! Thank you and PTL!!

I, Shelley, am so glad that Dieter could be with me at the memorial and burial services for Mom! He's a great support. Saying 'good-bye' is not a quick process, and I feel a bit in a "numbing mode" Thanks for praying for me through this season of grief.

"We hit the road running." The morning after we returned to Japan, we joined a group of church members who had gathered to say good-bye to our Pastor and his wife. The Lees have returned to Korea, and the church is now in search of a new pastor that will fit the internationalism of SIC. We are thankful for the provision of an interim retired pastor. Please pray for Sapporo International Church during this transition.

Summer means beach time! It took five cars to take 26 international to the annual English Speakers' Fellowship Beach Outing. God gave us a perfect day of sun and soft breeze, set right between many rainy days. Six non-Christian Japanese were invited and hopefully they felt the fellowship of the Spirit. Summer also means that when the weather is good our group meets at a park on Sunday afternoons. Remember the different ones of the group who lead the Bible studies and the worship time, that they will glorify the Lord.

The Guest Home remains a busy place. We now have a childcare worker from New Zealand who will be here for six months. Also a new missionary couple from Hong Kong is here for two months, while they wait to move into an apartment near the language school. This week a team of 9 arrives from

America to help some missionaries minister to surfers. May they have exciting outreaches in three different cities! On September 8 we welcome a young couple from Australia, Annabelle and Michael, who will come for a month to help us with projects at the Guest Home and with our ESF group. Pray for a profitable time working together and for God to impress His way for their future on their hearts.

Appreciating your partnership in Christ!

*Dieter and Shelley*

**Praise...** for God's goodness and provision all around during the time in the USA; for baptism preparation study started with Ms. Sue

**Pray...**for our church, as they search for a new pastor; for an outreach we hope to do with our ESF group; for Rebekah and Kevin as they plan their trip to Switzerland in October (for visas to be granted); for follow through on some medical check-ups

## **Grace Church Congregational Tuesday Afternoon Ladies' Bible Class**

The Ladies' Bible Class of Grace Church will begin its fall semester on Tuesday, October 14th, 2014. The class meets Tuesday afternoons, 1:15 – 2:45. All ladies are invited to attend. Attendees do not have to be members of Grace Church.

This fall, the study book continues to be *Isaiah, The Lord Saves* by Kathleen Buswell Nielson. The fall semester will resume study of the book in Isaiah Chapter 47, and on page 227 of the study book. In the words of the author, the goal of this study is to encourage "careful reading, observing the words, seeing the shape of a book and a passage, asking questions that take us into the text rather than away from it, and digging into the Word and letting it speak! Through such a process, guided by the Spirit, the Word of God truly feeds our souls." Each member of the class has an opportunity to lead the class; questions for the week are shared by members.

Reverend Thomas Bridgman will conduct an introductory class. Other topical experts may be called in as required.

The Ladies' Bible Class conducts the class as follows:

The class begins with prayer.

Subjects for prayer requests are identified, including our missionaries.

All members have the opportunity to pray.

One member of the class (on a rotating basis) leads the class, and passes the questions from the study book to members. Other members also provide their insights to the questions.

The class ends in prayer.

The class sends notes of encouragement to prayer request subjects.

During the past year, class members have been especially thankful for our answered prayers.

The Ladies' Bible Class collects a small amount of contributions from members. When a sufficient amount is collected, the group decides how it could be used to benefit Grace Church. Recently, the LBC purchased new cork boards for the display of information from our missionaries. The class also ordered new led timed candles for the church windows during the Christmas season.

We are very thankful for this class. Margaret Barbour estimates the class has been conducted for over 30 years.

To request a book or more information, please contact Betty Barbour, 413 238-5393.



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD A Ministry of Samaritan's Purse



Millions of children around the world will experience Christmas joy when they receive gift-filled boxes and hear the Gospel through Christian literature. **But it doesn't end there!** The children have the opportunity to take part in **The Greatest Journey**, a 12-lesson discipleship and evangelism program offered in their own language. What starts out as a simple gift--a shoe box containing toys, school supplies, and toiletries--is used by God to transform the hearts of millions of children and their families.

We are the Relay Center for Northern Berkshire County and expect over a thousand gift-filled shoe boxes to come through the doors of Grace Church!

### National Collection Week is

**Monday, November 17– Monday, November 24**

#### How can you help with this ministry?

- Talk to Charleen Bridgman, Relay Center Coordinator
- **Pack a shoebox.** Decorative "GO" (Gospel Opportunity) boxes will be available at the church. (Be sure to grab a packing brochure with info about what and what not to include). You could get together with a friend or two to share the cost.
- **Serve as a volunteer** at our Relay Center during Collection week. Opportunities for service include:
  - ⇒ Greeting those who come through our doors with their donated boxes
  - ⇒ Baking cookies to offer our guests
  - ⇒ Carrying packed shoeboxes from the cars into the church (**young people encouraged to apply!**)
  - ⇒ Packing the shoeboxes into larger boxes for transport to the Northampton Collection Center
  - ⇒ Loading the larger boxes onto the transport truck
  - ⇒ Keeping accurate logs of the number of boxes brought in each day, and from whom

Sign-up sheets for times and jobs will be available soon. For more information see Charleen Bridgman, Relay Center Coordinator (499-3040, or email [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net)).

**Help spread the joy!**



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS

## FALL SCHEDULE

Our fall schedule resumed on **Sunday, September 7th**, with **Sunday School** for children and adults at **9:30 am.**, and **worship** at **10:45 a.m.** The adult class is looking at how to study the Bible, based on *How to Study the Bible for All It's Worth*.



## CHURCH COOKOUT

All members and friends are welcome at our church cookout, **Sunday, September 21st**, at the gazebo, following morning worship service. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and beverages will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert. Come for good food, good fellowship, and some lawn games. Hope to see you there!

## PRAYER GATHERING

Our monthly prayer time for the ministry of our church will continue into the fall. Our next time of corporate prayer will be **Sunday, September 28th, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.**, and again on **Sunday, October 26th, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.** All are encouraged to be a part of this special time of acknowledging our dependence on our Heavenly Father and seeking His will for our part in His kingdom work.



## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men of all ages are invited to meet for a time of study, discussion, and prayer on **Saturday, October 18th, from 7-8:30 a.m.** Location to be announced. Light refreshments will be served.

## THANK YOU

Thank you to those who do various things to beautify our church's meeting place. **Millie DeVos** and **Linda Poulton** faithfully clean the church, and tend the flower beds. **Julie Ross** and **Mary Neff** supply beautiful flower arrangements for the sanctuary. We appreciate you!



## LOOKING AHEAD



## DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TO END

Daylight savings time will end on **Sunday, November 2nd, at 2 a.m.** Be sure to set your clocks back ("Fall Back") one hour before retiring for the night on **Saturday, November 1st.**



# September/October 2014



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
<b>21</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship <b>12:30 Church</b> <b>cookout</b>	<b>22</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship <b>5:00 Prayer</b> <b>Gathering</b>	<b>29</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>30</b>	<b>October 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship	<b>6</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship	<b>13</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>14</b> <b>1:15</b> Ladies' Bible Class	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> <b>7-8:30 am</b> <b>Men's Prayer Fellowship</b>
<b>19</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship	<b>20</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>21</b> <b>1:15</b> Ladies' Bible Class	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> <b>9:30</b> Sunday School <b>10:45</b> Worship <b>5:00 Prayer</b> <b>Gathering</b>	<b>27</b> <b>7:00</b> Addictions Victorious	<b>28</b> <b>1:15</b> Ladies' Bible Class	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	