

# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
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*Volume XIV, Issue 6*



*July 2015*

Any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter may be sent to [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net), or put in the tray on the secretary's desk.



## From the Pastor's Desk

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)*

This is the first two verses of one of the most familiar and one of the most well liked passages in the New Testament. How many children memorized these words in Sunday School in years past; and how many young couples have chosen to have this chapter read at their wedding. The famous love chapter. Yet, I wonder how many of us understand it in light of its broader context.

The context for this chapter begins a chapter earlier. Actually it begins at the very outset of Paul's letter. In chapter 1 Paul writes, *I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you, by brothers. (vv. 10-11)*

At first glance we might think these were doctrinal differences, and perhaps there were some minor theological differences between Paul, Apollos, and Peter; but I suspect they were more in the order of differences of personality and style. Perhaps Peter was more outward and dynamic, whereas Apollos was more introspective and detailed.

But when we turn to the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Epistle, we find the Apostle addressing the underlying motives behind the conflicts they were experiencing. At first glance here, we find the members of the Corinthian church divided over the use of certain spiritual gifts, but realistically this should be no cause of conflict. The underlying motive then has to do with their need for personal recognition and affirmation. The famous love chapter takes us from the underlying cause of conflict to what should be our Christian response to it.

Chapter 13 sounds sentimental and idealistic enough. Perhaps that is because it is almost poetic in form; certainly in expression. But what Paul is actually saying is that love--in the true sense of the word—is hard work. It takes serious commitment.

We are not typically inclined to think of love in this fashion. That's because we normally think of it as a feeling or an emotion. But the word that Paul uses here—*agape*--is a word that denotes commitment and action rather than sentiment.

The application is for the Corinthian church. But not just the Corinthian church. It is for our church too. Every church has its conflicts. That's because we all have our different personalities and gifts. But we are all sinners too. It is within the crucible of relationships within the church that we work through conflicts and that the Holy Spirit works his sanctifying work within us as we do.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



# Missions Corner



From **Los Angeles, Tuvia Zaretsky (with Jews for Jesus)** reports, "I recall an often-repeated principle from our earliest missionary training: The best way to meet Jewish people we can minister to is through the referrals of believing family and friends. So, no surprise when Jeff, a friend and supporter of our ministry on the East Coast, wrote to tell me that his wayward daughter is living with a Jewish guy in LA. They now have a child and are experiencing significant cross-cultural conflict in their relationship. Jeff was asking if I could meet with Ashley\* and Joel.\* I said, 'Sure, but they need to know that I'm a Jewish-Gentile couples specialist with Jews for Jesus.' Back came the reply that they would welcome an opportunity to meet as soon as possible. Please pray for his couple and their adventure with the Lord.

*Reprinted from Jews for Jesus July 2015 newsletter*

**Susan Stone in Romania with InterVarsity** requests prayer for upcoming ministry.

1. I currently have 3 "clients" for Life and Career Planning – two Christians and one not. As never before the work is intense and significant. One young man is trying to make a decision whether to leave the 8-employee IT company he started and go into Christian ministry working with students. Please pray that as I accompany these beloved ones on their journeys a bit, that we will end up where God wants us.
2. From July 13-28 I will be involved in 2 evangelistic English Camps first with students from Pitesti and then with students from Craiova. Please pray that God would be working mightily in the hearts of the many seekers who will be coming to these camps and that the truth, the relevance and the attractiveness of the gospel will be communicated clearly.



**George and Norine Carnevale with Wycliffe Associates in Dallas** write:

The summer has been slow. George always works harder, since the volunteers are not here. He has no one to assign jobs to now, but himself. He loves the hands on, but the heat is hard to bear as we "age". Pray for stamina and the wisdom when to stop and save some work for the next day.

WA is blessed and thriving. New departments are growing and the Lord is moving in amazing ways. Continue to pray for MAST, the Bible translation method that they are setting up. Churches are hungry for this and waiting and wanting to get the Scriptures into their languages. We are pleased to be able to support Bible translation around the world. What a great age in which we live!

## Operation Christmas Child Impact Stories: The Power of a Simple Gift

Collection week of November last year has come and gone. The shoeboxes filled with various items for children have been distributed. But that's not the end of the story. Around the world thousands of children are enrolled in a discipleship class, *The Greatest Journey*, learning about who Jesus is and what He came to do, and how that can make a difference in their lives. The box has been just the beginning of a journey with Jesus that will last a lifetime, and beyond. Read on and be amazed at what our God can accomplish through a simple gift distributed in His name.

*From a letter from our friend, Octavio:*

Years ago while I was visiting you [Grace Church], I had the chance to help a bit with the Samaritans Purse shoe boxes. I honestly never thought it could have such an impact on children's lives around the globe. As I have been interacting with brothers and sisters here in Kosovo, I have noticed that most of the younger generation of believers here in [this city] have actually heard the Gospel through the shoebox project. Every single one of the people I talked to and asked about how they first heard the good news have said that it was through the Samaritans Purse!! The church here is very active, they have different projects going on, very strong emphasis on children's ministry here, lots of work and freedom to evangelize.

*Yuliya received a shoebox at age 9 in a Central Asian country.*

When I lifted the lid on my purple plastic shoebox, the first thing I saw was a stuffed dog. I was filled with exuberant joy! I just remember hugging it. Even though I had toys growing up, the dog was an item you couldn't find in my country. It was really soft and had puppy eyes. It was my new best friend, my new-found treasure.

My second favorite item was bubble gum-flavored toothpaste that came in a pink tube. We didn't know such a thing existed. We would squeeze out a bit the size of the tip of a match so we could get a little bit of flavor and make it last as long as possible. Word traveled fast. My friends would line up in our bathroom and my sister and I would squeeze out a tiny amount on their toothbrushes. I think we made it last about two years.

The toys were the most important things to me as a 9-year-old but it also stood out that the letter in the box said, "I am praying for you." As time went on, I realized why. With my shoebox, here was someone I'd never met and never seen, yet she was still praying for me.

We became pen pals and she would always close her letters, "I am praying for you." I always wondered, "Why is she praying for me?" The impact hit me more than seven years later after I became a Christian. She was showing me the love of Christ all along, starting with the shoebox and continuing in her prayers. The shoebox was a seed. Sometimes you see fruit right away and other times it takes years for the seed to grow.

I still have my stuffed dog 14 years later. That's a glimpse of how much the shoebox meant to me because it was packed with love and prayer.

Wouldn't you like to be a part of this ministry that touches the lives of children, families, and whole communities? Pack a shoebox this year on your own or with a friend, and/or join our Relay Center team during National Collection Week in November, as we collect shoeboxes from churches and individuals in Berkshire County. Want to know more? Speak to Charleen Bridgman, Relay Center Coordinator.



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## Sunday Afternoon Special

Do you like to sing? What is the place of music in worship? Join us following worship on **Sunday, July 19th** for a lunch and presentation on music in worship.



## Anniversary Thanksgiving



Pastor Tom and Charleen give thanks to God for His faithfulness and blessing on 39 years of marriage, celebrated June 26.

*“O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.”  
Psalm 107:1*

## Prayer Gatherings

All are encouraged to join us for our monthly prayer gathering as we intercede together, seek God's face that we might grow in grace and the knowledge of His love, and reflect His image in our church and community. This time of corporate prayer will be on **Sunday, July 26th, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.** in the sanctuary.

*“And he [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” Luke 18:1-8*



## Church Community

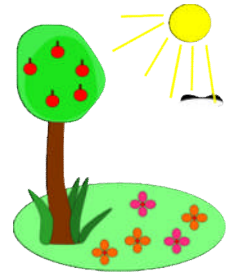


Let's take advantage of the longer days and more relaxed pace (for some) of the summer months to get together in each other's homes, or for outings, or just for a cool glass of lemonade and conversation. It can be a challenge to make the time, but the importance and benefits of cultivating relationships in the body and knowing how to better pray for one another are worth the effort.

*“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another... Hebrews 10:24*



# July 2015



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			1	2	3	4 Happy Independence Day 
5 10:00 Worship	6 7:00 Addictions Victorious	7	8	9	10	11
12 10:00 worship	13 7:00 Addictions Victorious	14	15	16	17	18 7:00-8:30 am Men's Prayer Fellowship
19 10:00 Worship  Lunch and Presentation	20 7:00 Addictions Victorious	21	22	23	24	25
26 10:00 Worship  5:00 Prayer Gathering	27 7:00 Addictions Victorious	28	29	30	31 	