

# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

*Volume XVII, Issue 4*

*July 2018*



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



## From the Pastor's Desk

*Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. (Deuteronomy 7:9)*

Tom Lanoue and I had the privilege of visiting our oldest surviving member, Margaret Barbour, in her home today. Margaret and her husband Paul were among the thirteen individuals who signed the original church covenant in September 1959. She has never been bashful about telling people her age, and given the fact that she is closing in on the century mark, we have reason to celebrate her longevity with her.

Tomorrow we will welcome five new members into the fellowship of the church. (six, if we count one year old Patience) What a privilege! Along with that we also celebrated last Sunday the safe arrival of William Drake Laudon, infant son of Evan and Katie. William is not the only wee one we have in church on Sundays; at last count we now have eight preschoolers among our ranks. I say again, EIGHT, some still in arms, but others navigating their way at a high rate of speed between the rows of chairs after worship on Sunday mornings.

After going for several years without babies in the church, it is a breath of fresh air to have them around again. Along with that, we sent one of our high schoolers (Seyvon Kouao) off on a mission trip to Colombia last week and watched another (Sinaia Smith) march with cap and gown to receive her high school diploma. To see the beginnings of the next generation of Grace Church is an answer to prayer.

The words of Deuteronomy were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel as they prepared to cross the Jordan River into the promised land. Moses reminded them of the past forty years of their history- how God rescued them from their bondage in Egypt by parting the waters of the Red Sea. God had spoken to them from the mountain, and they had a record of his words written on stone stashed in the ark of the covenant and housed in the tabernacle. Those words as well as the recorded words of their history were meant to define them as a people. And all those words were to be taught to their children for generations to come.

About a year ago I wrote in our newsletter that most of the families, my parents and in-laws included, who were a part of the early years of Grace Church were in their thirties and early forties. Margaret Barbour included. Those families had a vision to plant a church that was committed to the historic gospel in the rocky soil of New England. How Pittsfield has changed since the days of a busy General Electric plant. Yet the vision of Grace Church has remained the same.

Throughout the years we have seen families come and go, and we have seen children grow up and have children and grandchildren of their own. We have seen our children leave to serve God in a variety of ways, including in formal ministry and on distant mission fields, many of whom were commissioned for service in our very sanctuary. That's no small thing!

So when we see our little infants in arms and our toddlers dashing about between the chairs, what do we see? Do we see the next generation of Grace Church? and do we see the next generation for Christ's Kingdom? The investment that we make in our children as parents and grandparents today is for tomorrow and generations to come.

Moses reminds us that the Lord our God is a faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. That's why he reminds us to teach those words diligently to our children. May he give us the grace to remain faithful.



Pastor Tom Bridgman



## **Now I Have a Heart for God: An Operation Christmas Child Impact Story: Tanzania**

Each time he pricked his feet on thorns or felt the jabs of kids who jeered at his bare feet, 13-year-old Kwale thought of the shoes his parents had promised: “When we have the money.” Even his teachers seemed to pick on him, assigning him dirty jobs like cleaning the toilets or telling him to just go home because he was barefoot. “Don’t give up,” his mom would tell him. But Kwale already had.

“Because I did not have a pair of shoes, I was not equal to other students,” Kwale said. Sometimes as he walked to school, he said the “devil was bringing different thoughts of what I can do to get a pair of shoes.” He considered begging or stealing, because he didn’t see God responding to his mother’s prayers or fasting. Although he accompanied her to church, he did not follow Jesus. “I had no heart for God or going to church,” he said. Unknown to Kwale, the Lord had indeed heard his mother’s prayer, and His answer was coming in a shoebox. And God had more in store for Kwale than he could have imagined.

One Sunday at church, he was surprised to hear that a Gospel celebration was planned and that the children would be receiving Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes shipped halfway around the world from Samaritan’s Purse. The story still makes him emotional when he tells it. “The box had a lot of things,” Kwale said, “but when I opened that box, I found a pair of shoes and a pair of socks. And when I got that pair of shoes, my heart toward God began to change. This was the first time I saw God answering my prayers.”

That same day, Kwale signed up for The Greatest Journey, a 12-lesson discipleship and evangelism course that Samaritan’s Purse offers through churches for children who have received Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts. Through these classes, he learned that his deepest needs couldn’t be met through a pair of shoes or by gaining acceptance at school. He discovered that he needed a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. “I knew I had sinned,” Kwale said. “But I learned that God gave His only Son and if I ask for forgiveness He will have mercy on me and forgive me. Now I have a heart for God.”

Kwale is among 6.9 million boys and girls who have made decisions for Christ through The Greatest Journey over the past eight years. As they graduate, they receive their own copies of the New Testament and are encouraged to share their faith with friends and family members. Kwale is so excited about Jesus that he has volunteered to teach the classes to even more children. Now he prays for the same friends and teachers who once taunted him, and his shoes are a constant reminder that God is faithful to answer. Several friends have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior through Kwale’s testimony.

“I was so joyous, so happy, and I remembered my mother encouraging me that I should not give up,” Kwale said, describing how much his faith has grown since receiving his shoes. “Now I can say that God does not come too early or too late.”

**A simple gift bathed in prayer is life-changing**

## MEET YOUR NEW MEMBERS

*“But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose...Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” I Corinthians 12:18 and 27*



Jonathan and Joyce Lueken are missionaries to South Sudan and God brought them together as husband and wife from halfway across the world.

Jonathan grew up in New England doing ministry/missions work with his family domestically since he was a newborn. Homeschooled throughout his education, he also took some courses in Disaster Relief, as well as at a Bible discipleship school.

Not cut out for life in America and looking for an opportunity to serve the Lord in cross-cultural missions, in 2013 he jumped into doing life and living out the Gospel (by the Grace of God) amongst the Madi tribe in South Sudan with Operation Nehemiah. Jonathan’s favorite book of the Bible is 1 Samuel.

Joyce was born in a refugee camp in Uganda, a daughter of South Sudanese parents and number 8 of 11 brothers and sisters. She grew up doing the hard work of helping her mother maintain the household and feed her hungry brothers and sisters. Returning to South Sudan in 2008 at the age of 16, she completed her high school education in 2012. Joyce intended to become a Nun but was redirected and went through a Nursing Assistant’s school in 2015. She began to single-handedly run the Nehemiah Field Clinic in Borongole. Joyce has always had a desire to serve and help others. She enjoys perusing the pages of the Uganda Clinical Guidelines for Medical Conditions and every book of the Bible is her favorite.

Jonathan and Joyce met each other in Borongole in 2013, but it took a year for Jonathan to realize that perhaps God had plans for both of them, and even longer to get up the courage to ask her. Their courtship involved working together at the clinic and treating each other’s various bouts of malaria and typhoid. They married in July 2016, in the middle of the most recent civil war of South Sudan, with the village almost completely evacuated at the time, because of the crisis. Through many trials and challenges, the Lord made a way for Joyce and Jonathan to fly to the USA in the 37<sup>th</sup> week of Joyce’s first pregnancy!

Little Patience Rozana was born a month later on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. She is a bundle of Joy and is true to her name most of the time. (The rest of the time she is teaching her parents what her name means). Her first and favorite words are “Oh! Baby!” and she likes to sing “Oh How He loves You and Me” with Dada (grandma in Madi).

Jonathan and Joyce have been so blessed by the prayers of all the dear brothers and sisters at Grace Congregational Church, even before they met all of you in person! They are very excited to become members of Grace Church and grow closer to the Lord together.





# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## New Baby Announcement

We rejoice with the Laudon family who welcomed little William on Friday, June 22nd. Congratulations to parents and siblings!

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward." Psalm 127:3*

## Church Family Expansion

We rejoice also in the expansion of our church family with the addition of new members during our July 1st service. Welcome to Roger and Patty Lueken, Jonathan, Joyce, and Patience Lueken, and Cynthia Williams.

*"...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. " I Peter 2:5*

## "Live Coals" Prayer Gathering

All are encouraged to come out for our monthly time of corporate prayer **July 1st** from **5:00-6:00 p.m.**

*"This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us." I John 5:14*



## Women's Fellowship

Grace Fellowship for Women will wrap up their study of I Peter on **Saturday, July 7th from 9:30-11:00 a.m.** at the church. The Fellowship will resume with a new study beginning in October.



## Mission Presentation and Fellowship Meal

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>**, when Ciprian and Eve Droma will join us on their last Sunday before returning to their ministry in Romania. Following worship, they will present their work, and we will share a fellowship lunch. Please **see the sign-up sheet at the back** and add your name if you plan to come!



## Men's Prayer Fellowship


Men of all ages are invited to be a part of the Men's Prayer Fellowship, **Saturday, July 21st, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.** at the home of Doug Rose in Stockbridge. Enjoy a look into *Unlimited Grace*, by Bryan Chapell, discussion, prayer, and fellowship. Breakfast will be served.





# July 2018



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
<b>1</b> 10:00 am Worship  <b>5:00 "Live Coals" Prayer</b>	<b>2</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>  Happy 4th of July!	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 9:30-11:00 am <b>Women's Fellowship</b>
<b>8</b> 10:00 am Worship <b>Missions Presentation and Fellowship Meal</b>	<b>9</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> 10:00 am Worship	<b>16</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 7:00-8:30 am <b>Men's Prayer Fellowship</b>
<b>22</b> 10:00 am Worship	<b>23</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 10:00 am Worship	<b>30</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>31</b>				