

# Grace Notes



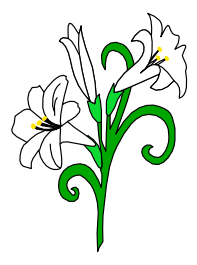
Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

*Volume X, Issue 3*

*April 2011*



*Happy Easter!*  
***I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.***  
***John 11:25,26***



*Any submissions or suggestions for the next edition of this newsletter may be sent to [secretary.gracecl@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecl@verizon.net)*



## From the Pastor's Desk

*This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:6)*

Charleen and I have gotten several emails from Dieter and Shelley Schmidt updating us on the catastrophic events that have unfolded over the last three weeks in Japan. The most recent included a couple of photos. The devastation is unimaginable; heaps of rubble where there were once towns and villages. At the same time Christians are there, both Japanese and missionaries, seeking to bring the presence of Christ into such grief and suffering. Charleen and I were privileged to spend almost two weeks in the Sendai area in the spring and summer of 1977. I still remember the breathtaking beauty of the cherry blossoms on the university campus there, so I feel an added measure of sorrow.

Dieter wrote telling us that he was participating with a team in the affected area while Shelley remained in Sapporo to hold down the fort. I don't know how close they might be to the Fukushima power plant or if they will be subject to any radiation. We certainly want to keep all of them in our prayers for God's protection and their safety.

It's not just Japan in the news. We continue to watch the situations unfold in Libya and the Ivory Coast. While Libya seems at quite a distance from us, we have three brothers from the Ivory Coast who are part of our church, and while they live here in Pittsfield, the situation there is not far from them in that they have family and friends still there.

In the passage quoted above, Paul speaks of the barrier that had existed between Jews and Gentiles as having been broken down. It may not seem like much to us from our vantage point, but it was a pretty powerful thing in Paul's day. Paul himself had grown up as a strict Jew. He had been trained as a Pharisee. For him, association with non-Jews was not kosher; it was something you just didn't do. What is so amazing is that it is Paul, out of all the other apostles, that God sent as a missionary to the gentile world. When there were those in the church who sought to put limits on the makeup of the church, it was Paul who most strenuously opposed them. We see evidence of this riddled throughout his epistles.

The point is that there is a tendency for us to define the church, the fellowship of believers, by our geographical or cultural context. I'm not talking about our theology or our doctrine here. What I'm talking about is those things that are familiar to us, those things that make us feel comfortable, whether it be the language we speak, the food we eat or the customs we are used to—those things that have nothing to do with our core beliefs or relationship with Christ.

In last month's newsletter I wrote about Charleen's and my trip to Martinique. We had the privilege of worshipping at a little Baptist church near where Ian lives. Despite the fact that I was worshipping in a language I couldn't understand and in a culture that was significantly different from what I was used to, I was struck by how warmly Charleen and I were received in that fellowship—as brothers and sisters in Christ—which is exactly what we were. Someone even translated the service for me. This was Christian hospitality at its best.

Yes, we are members of a local congregation, but we are also members of a church that transcends our cultural, linguistic, and geographical distances. If we lose sight of that reality then our prayers for our fellow Christians in Japan, or Libya, or the Ivory Coast will ring hollow, and our efforts at spreading the gospel even here at home will be truncated.

Pastor Tom Bridgman





# Missions Corner

## Earthquake Report from the Schmidts: “I Want to Return to Those Days”

*Dear friends, Mike McGinty, our Regional Director and the leader of our team that took a trip down to the Tohoku region, has written up a report and summary. It gives some insight into the tragedy we encountered.*

The dawn had just broken as I walked alone with my thoughts on the frozen ground near the Kamaishi harbor surveying the unimaginable destruction that seemed incongruous to the promise of a beautiful new day. Overturned cars, large ships beached on the shore, twisted train tracks, heaps of mud, empty foundations where houses once stood, and roads plowed through the piles of rubbish everywhere testified to the power of the tsunami caused by the earthquake on March 11th. Mountains of every kind of debris representing the lives of the town’s inhabitants lay exposed for all to see, but one particular item caught my eye... an old 45 rpm record. I had not seen one in several years so I wiped off the mud revealing the title of the song “I Want to Return to Those Days”. As I stood there quietly in the midst of so much sadness this song, written in another era, seemed to represent the heart cry of the survivors who were trying to pick up the pieces of their lives.

Our team of six had traveled from Sapporo to assist people in returning to those days but our efforts seemed feeble in light of the enormous needs. Loved ones who were missing were unlikely to return home. Possessions and homes that were destroyed would not be easily replaced. Community life would never be the same again. Previous plans and dreams had been swept away by the tsunami and were now subject to a new, harsh reality. A life of waiting in lines for gasoline, food and basic necessities was the new ‘normal’. Sleepless nights in evacuation centers with hundreds of others on hard wooden floors, dealing with constant mud, cold, frequent aftershocks and lack of personal hygiene would only serve to intensify the longing for those days that would never return.

While it was hard to witness so much personal loss, we were struck even further by the lack of evangelical churches in the areas that had been hit the hardest by the tsunami. We came for a few days with our shovels to clear away the debris and cooked food to feed the hungry, but who would stay behind to feed souls and share about the God of hope who alone can rebuild broken lives?

Even if these people could somehow return to those days of the past, their most critical need would remain unmet as they need to return to the God who created them. Herein lays the greater challenge we must face as a mission while we continue to do what we can to minister to immediate physical needs. The God who pleaded with His people: “Now return to me, and I will return to you” (Malachi 3:7), desires the same for the Japanese. May God use us all in the coming days to offer help and hope to them. Our weeklong journey of 1,700 km and a 4-hour ferry is now over but what did we bring back with us besides a lot of dirty clothes?

A greater admiration for the Japanese people—Their ability to absorb tremendous losses and move forward in community was a tremendous example to us on a daily basis.

Thankfulness for our team and those who supported us—Our immediate team embodied the diversity of OMF with three Swiss, a Singaporean, a Canadian, and an American. God enabled us to work together closely in difficult circumstances using our individual gifts for His unique purposes. Throughout the trip we were also keenly aware of the larger team that stood behind us praying and assisting in countless ways.

Appreciation for the generosity of God’s people—The church, the missionary community and supporters back home gave sacrificially of their goods, money and time. This touched the lives of those we ministered to when they asked where the supplies and assistance came from.

Amazement at God’s provision, guidance and protection—The provision of special police permits, protection from injuries, extra stamina and patience for difficult circumstances, incident free travel, divine appointments and places to sleep each night were constant reminders of our Heavenly Father’s care.

Excitement of seeing the church in action—We crossed paths with several pastors, and organizations eager to help and united in purpose, overcoming the things that often divide us.

*Thanks for your support and ongoing prayer for the people of Japan!*



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## Women of Grace

The monthly Women of Grace meeting will be **Saturday, April 9th, from 10 a.m.-1:00 p.m.** All women and teenaged girls are invited to join together for a time of Biblical nurture, prayer, and fellowship over lunch. Hope to see you there!



## Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men of the church are invited to join together for a time of devotional, prayer and breakfast, **Saturday morning, April 16th, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.**, at the church. Light refreshments will be served.



## Prayer Vigil

All are encouraged to join together for a special times of corporate prayer **Sunday, April 17th, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.**, as we seek God's direction for our church and our ministry in the community, and pray for His glory to be made known.



**Maundy Thursday Dinner and Communion**  
**Thursday, April 21st**, we will share a potluck supper at **6:00 p.m.**, followed by a **communion service at 7:00**. Please bring a dish to share. Beverages and dessert will be provided.



## National Day of Prayer

The local National Day of Prayer celebration will take place **Thursday, May 5th**, on the green of the Berkshire County Superior Courthouse in Pittsfield. The program begins at **12 noon** with speakers and special music, followed by prayer at the courthouse from 1:00-2:00 p.m.

## Vacation Bible School 2011

Vacation Bible School 2011 is coming up **June 28-July 2, Tuesday-Saturday, from 9-12 a.m.** Please pray for all the preparations involved, including staff, activities, music, and especially Bible teaching. Pray for those children who will attend, that God's glory will be made known to them and their families.



## Andrew Kirkman's Address

Andrew Kirkman, stationed at Fort Hood, would no doubt appreciate hearing from his church family here at home. His address is:

Mr Andrew Kirkman  
3709 Tatonka Drive  
Killeen TX 76549



# April 2010



S

M

T

W

T

F

S

						1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship				7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious		10-1 p.m. Women of Grace	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship				7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious		Men's Prayer Fellowship 7:00-8:30 a.m.	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 5:00 Prayer Vigil				6:00 Maundy Thursday dinner and communion service	Good Friday 		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
<b>Easter Sunday</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship				7:00 p.m. Addictions Victorious			

## **Learning & Arriving – Extolling the LORD’s Covenant**

He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and merciful.  
He provides food for those who fear him;  
He remembers his covenant forever. Ps. 111:4 – 5.

During the next Sunday School “trimester” for the young men, the class will undertake to examine the topic of “God’s Covenant Relationship with Man.” The syllabus includes nine or ten weeks of instruction on the divine promise of salvation and God’s fulfillment and performance of that promise throughout Biblical history, as documented and recited by the Holy Spirit in and through Scripture. Your correspondent has been blessed to have been asked by the Elders to lead the young men in their curriculum. We will begin every class with recitations of the appointed weekly offices from the Revised Common Lectionary (a Psalm, an Old Testament reading, a reading from the Epistles, and a Gospel passage). The young men will then be engaged in a short lecture on the fulfillment of God’s Covenant, from the covenant with Adam, to those with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the Prophets. We will conclude with the ultimate fulfillment of God’s salvific covenant with mankind in Jesus Christ: His incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, apostolic commission, ascension, and parousia. We will also devote a part of each class to a discussion of topical, “current event” issues in Christian life and modern society, as we reflect on God’s covenantal performance in the world today.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practice it have a good understanding.  
His praise endures forever! Ps. 111:10

Please urge all of the young men in your family, in your friends’ families, and in your wider social community to attend this class – it is open to all comers and the only required textbook is the Bible. Evangelism by definition cannot and will not limit itself just to our believing Church membership, and the Gospel mandates the spread of the knowledge and love of the Savior to every potential believer. Assuredly, all those who practice reverence of God’s covenant will enjoy the beginning of wisdom.

*Doug Rose*

## Vacation Bible School 2011

**Dates:** The week of June 28th-July 2nd, Tuesday-Saturday, with a closing program on Saturday followed by a lunch for parents and children.

**Theme:** *Faith Expedition*

Plans for Vacation Bible School are coming along. **Thank you** to those willing to fill the following positions (a **partial** list of volunteers). We would all appreciate your prayers that God will prepare and use us to proclaim the good news to families in our community.

**Teachers (more may be needed)**

Jessica Logsdon  
JoAnn Kulberg  
Ian Bridgman  
Betty DeNoble

**Classroom Helpers (more needed)**

Ruth Kirkman

**Skit Co-coordinators and Actresses**

Chavah Kirkman  
Emily Graham

**Recreation Coordinator (assistant needed)**

Maddie Lanoue

**Craft Coordinator (helpers still needed)**

Brenda Wright

**Music**

Clive Davis, Betty Barbour

**Snacks**

Cheryl Lanoue  
Margaret McBurney  
Eunice Ross

**Wherever Needed/Saturday cookout**

Tom Ross  
Linda Poulton  
Louise Carron  
Tom Lanoue  
Toby Logsdon

A few good men, women, or young people are also needed to staff the following positions: **Registration, transportation coordinator, publicity coordinator, craft helpers.** If you think God is calling you to be involved in this vital ministry, please speak to Charleen Bridgman, VBS Director, at church or at 499-3040, as soon as possible.

**Please be thinking about children to invite! Invitations and flyers for distribution will be made available at a later date, so please be praying in advance for families you know that could be invited. Pray that God would be pleased to work in and through us to introduce children and their families to the family of God!**



## Sunday School - The Teaching of Our Young in Faith and Love in Christ Jesus

Our children of Grace Church are a gift from God and we are commanded to teach them. "You shall teach them (statutes and commands) diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates." Deut.6:6-9

I have had the wonderful opportunity to teach Sunday school this past quarter to our young girls, Arnell and Belle. Our lessons have been on "Knowing Jesus": "The Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world." 1 John 4:14b. We have learned of the wonderful names of Jesus: Son of the Most High, Son of God, Savior, Immanuel, and The Word. We have studied the Gift of God: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. We have also studied our gifts to Him: our hearts, our love, and our worship.

We have learned of some of the great miracles that Jesus performed here on earth: the changing of water to wine, healing the sick, raising the dead. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." John 20:31.

We have had some wonderful discussions and they have raised some thought-provoking questions. It is truly amazing how the Lord is working in their lives. We need to be ever mindful of them in our prayers; they may be small, but the spiritual issues with which each of them are dealing are often great. "But Jesus called the children to him and said 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" Luke 18:16.

The Lord has blessed me these past 13 weeks with His teaching graces, and I am looking forward to teaching again this next quarter. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Prov.22:6.

*Brenda Wright*





