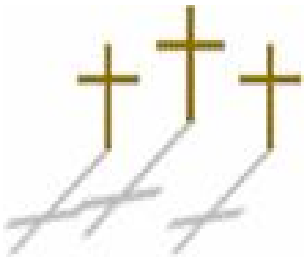




Grace Notes



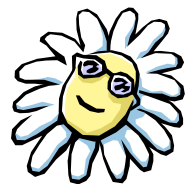
Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Welcome to the August 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





From the Pastor's Desk

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him." ... And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:18, 22-23)

This has been an eventful summer for Charleen and me. Two weeks ago I officiated as my daughter Rachel joined hands in marriage with her husband, Tom O'Marra. As I did, I reflected on the fact that thirty-five years earlier Charleen and I stood in the very same spot and exchanged our vows.

In the past couple of weeks I have been able to take some of our old slides and scan them into my computer, in particular the slides of Charleen's and my honeymoon. (We went camping in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland) Seeing them again brings back many memories. All of this has given me cause to reflect on marriage and the meaning of the vows we exchange in a wedding.

Charleen and I were engaged for almost two years; she was in college in Vermont, and I in Massachusetts. We dutifully wrote one another virtually every day. I was taking biblical Hebrew as a language and on the bottom of each letter I wrote in small Hebrew script, "*ani ohev otah*"; "*ahav*" being one of the two Hebrew words for "love". It is the word that perhaps captures best the strength of emotion. The other Hebrew word for love is "*chesed*". It is perhaps more often than not translated, "steadfast love", and is often coupled with the word "*emunah*", which means faithfulness. Ideally in marriage the "*ahav*" kind of love deepens as it matures, but the moment a bride and groom say, "I do", they also begin to say "*chesed*" as well.

Think of the words of the traditional vows; "I ___ take you ___ to be my husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death."

We never know what the future holds. Thirty five years ago I could not have told you what would unfold for Charleen and me, although we both knew that God was calling us into the ministry. (We thought it was the mission field then) But sometimes we may encounter situations in the course of life that will test our resolve to be true to the vows we make to one another on our wedding day. It might be a disfiguring accident, a debilitating disease, or perhaps financial hardship. It might be any number of things. We might find ourselves saying, "this is not what I expected," or that we have "fallen out of love." But the circumstances of life do not negate the seriousness of the vows we have made.

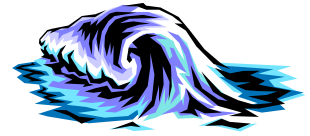
Several years ago, while attending the Ligonier Conference in Orlando, I was so struck by a simple act of marital faithfulness that it brought tears to my eyes. It was when Ken Tada wheeled his wife, Joni Eareckson Tada onto the stage for her presentation and then retrieved her forty-five minutes later. Think about the implications: She is a quadriplegic. She cannot brush her teeth or brush her hair. She cannot even bathe herself. Day in, day out; for better for worse, for richer for poorer.

There is more to love than just emotions. There is also commitment.

The vows we make count for a lot. The Bible makes a lot of marriage. So should we.

Pastor Tom Bridgman





Schmidt's Prayer Letter

Great East Japan Earthquake/Tsunami update:

A boat on the water- "Got to get it out to sea, beyond the tsunami waves, so that our island will have some way of communication after the disaster." A true story about Mr. Sugawara who against all odds, on March 11, did save his boat, and became the hero for the island he lives on, as his was the only boat that survived, and he became the only way to get food and water to his people for the first two weeks.

Another boat. Looking up from below the water, you see it drifting a little here, a little there, rocking with the waves, yet being held in place by a strong anchor, held fast to solid rock.

The tsunami/earthquake disaster has changed Japan permanently. OMF in Japan is also facing changes because of it. OMF has decided to start a 2-year project to serve the needy in the affected regions. It is one of the most unchurched areas in Japan, with only a few evangelical churches. Hokkaido's Regional Director and his wife have been led by God to move down there and spearhead this new ministry. The mission has rented a building where volunteer teams can stay and have a base. They will work with a local pastor and seek to meet the needs of the displaced people.

The hearts of the Japanese in this stricken area are hurting. They need soul care, someone to listen to them and to share the Good News with them. Recently, setting up a portable cafe for people who live in temporary shelters seems to be filling a need. Shelley and others are sending baked goods and baking supplies. OMF and other organizations, including the Japanese churches, keep sending teams to the area.

Dieter will lead a team August 18-26. His group will be helping with rebuilding and cleaning up, still a huge and unfinished task. Our church will be sending a team down September 19-24.

ESF news: Most Sundays our English Speaking Fellowship meets outside at a park, to enjoy Sapporo's short summer. We also have various activities planned where our group can get to interact at a different level. We thank the Lord that the relationship with the African lady has improved dramatically. Thanks for interceding for her.

Guest Home news: We had a bit of a breather in July after the busy months of May and June with short term workers here. Samuel from Switzerland was a great help to Dieter and they got many a fixing project done. Rosalind, from the UK, spent 6 months helping with child care for OMF language students and outreach to university students. Different missionaries from Tokyo come and stay to get away from the heat.

Family news:

Hannah was able to move out into her own apartment at the beginning of July. She found a reasonable place not too far from here and is happy to be in her own now, getting around by bicycle. Her first trimester of teaching comes to a close at the end of July and we will have a week of summer vacation together in August. **Rebekah** is safely back in Indonesia after a very busy 6 weeks in the USA. **Andrea** will be starting her 7th year as a high school math teacher in Georgia, close to Atlanta. Pray for our three "teacher" daughters, that they would trust God and walk closely with Him everyday.

Please pray for us as we travel to Indonesia (August 30-September 13) to visit Rebekah, and to celebrate 30 years of marriage and God's goodness to us!

Our boat rocks- having our good friends, the Weemes, moving back to the US for good; finding out about the death of a friend's teenage son; hearing about the struggles of the Japanese in the aftermath of the disaster..but we find ourselves holding on to our unchanging God, during these times of uncertainty.

Pray that the Japanese will find their HOPE in Jesus, the Solid Rock and the anchor for their souls.

<http://vimeo.com/23103610>

Pray that the efforts of volunteers will bring much fruit of the Kingdom - for protection, guidance to people with open hearts, and words led by the Spirit.

Pray that missionaries and Japanese Christians continue anchored to the Hope and Strength of the Lord.

Thank you for praying for us.
Dieter and Shelley



GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Marriage Announcement

Pastor Tom and Charleen announce the marriage of their daughter Rachel to Thomas O'Marra. Rachel and Tom were married by a justice of the peace on July 15th, followed by a church ceremony and reception at Grace Church on July 23rd. They are currently making their home in Pittsfield.



In Sympathy



We grieve with the Clark family as they mourn the loss of their son Michael, 26, who had been missing for about a week. Michael's memorial service was held on August 2nd in Lenox. Continue to uphold his parents Gordon and Carol, as well as his siblings Lisa, Emily, Holly, David and Peter. Mike knew his Savior. He was employed at Cape Abilities Farm. Donations in his memory can be given to Cape Abilities, Inc. in care of Finnerty and Stevens Funeral Home in Great Barrington.

Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men of the church are invited to be a part of the Men's Prayer fellowship on **Saturday morning, August 20th, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.** at the church. Light refreshments will be served.



Prayer Gathering



All are encouraged to come together in prayer before the Lord as we seek His guidance for our church and our ministry in the community. Join us in the sanctuary from **5:00-6:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 28th** for a special time of corporate prayer.

Our Students

Remember in prayer the church family's college students as they will be heading off to college later this month. Pray for traveling mercies and good adjustments as they begin another year of studies.



LOOKING AHEAD



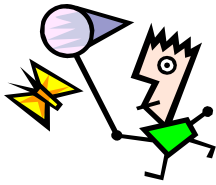
Fall Schedule

Beginning on **Sunday, September 11th**, we will return to our fall schedule with **Sunday School for all ages beginning at 9:30 a.m. and worship at 10:45.**

Special Picnic

Save **Sunday, September 11th**, for a special church picnic as a **send-off for Eve**. Eve will be leaving for St. Petersburg, Russia for language training. The cookout will follow the worship service. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and beverages will be provided. Please bring a dish to share. Rain or shine- so pray for a dry day!






AUGUST 2010



S M T W T F S

	1	2	3	4 7:00 Addictions Victorious	5	6
7 10:00 Worship	8	9	10	11 7:00 Addictions Victorious	12	13
14 10:00 Worship	15	16	17	18	19	20 Men's Prayer Fellowship 7:00-8:30 a.m.
21 10:00 Worship	22	23	24	25 7:00 Addictions Victorious	26	27
28 10:00 Worship 5:00 Prayer Vigil	29	30	31			

Learning & Arriving: A True Evangelical

As we listen and learn from our Pastor over the course of this Summer's sermons about certain core concepts and fundamentals of our evangelical faith, I commend for your reading a short companion volume (134 pp.) by Rev. John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity, & Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003). In *Evangelical Truth*, Stott introduces the reader to evangelical essentials, and provides first a broad description of the evangelical faith as the "original, apostolic, New Testament Christianity." Stott describes several schools of thought concerning the tenets of evangelicalism, but early arrives at the hypothesis that "we begin with the gospel", and end with an elegant, Trinitarian definition of our faith: "[T]he origin of the gospel was not speculation, but revelation [from God]; its substance was not the world's wisdom, but Christ's cross; and its efficacy was not due to rhetoric, but to the Holy Spirit's power." The "three essentials to which evangelical people are determined to bear witness ... concern the gracious initiative of God the Father in revealing himself to us, in redeeming us through Christ crucified, and in transforming us through the indwelling Spirit."

As evangelicals, notwithstanding the depth of our faith, the complexities of our exegesis, and the vastness of our apologetic, we tenaciously hold to the three basic "R's": revelation, redemption, and renewal. Without the interlocking and all-sustaining foundations of Scripture, the Cross, and the living Church, our profession of a Christian faith would be meaningless. Although the books we need to read along our path of conversion and sanctification are many, this short tome will prove to be well-worth a weekend's diversion and \$11.00 expenditure at the Christian bookstore.

At almost the same moment that I had turned the last page of *Evangelical Truth*, and picked up the daily newspaper, I learned sadly that Rev. Stott has left this world to join our Savior on July 27, 2011. Author of such classical theological discourses as *Basic Christianity*, *The Cross of Christ*, *The Contemporary Christian* (in our Church library), and *The Radical Disciple* (his very last book), Stott wrote and spoke with faith, about faith, and to our faith. John Stott was a true evangelical.

Doug Rose