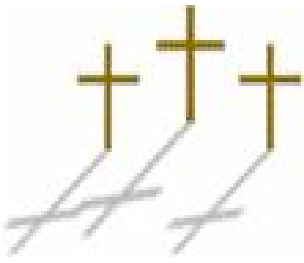





Grace Notes



 Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201



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Happy Valentine's Day to You



"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us."

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

 I John 3:16 and I John 4:11



From the Pastor's Desk

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance... (Hebrews 12:1)

I want to thank all of you who were praying for Ian and me while we were on our bicycle trip on the Florida Keys. Someone said you were praying I wouldn't have a heart attack. I'm still intact.

It was a great trip! I had driven to Orlando in advance with Ian's and my bicycles, where I had a meeting with the other Area Representatives of our Conference from all around the country. The day our meeting ended Ian flew down and I met him at the airport, from where we drove together to Fort Lauderdale. We attended church together the next morning, then packed up our panniers and pedaled south along the intercoastal waterway through Miami Beach and Miami to Homestead. The next day we headed for the Keys, taking three more days to reach Key West. Lots of palm trees, bridges, blue ocean water, and pelicans. The weather was ideal - in the 70's with only one thunderstorm; we even got sunburned. One or the other of us had a flat tire every day, the first directly across the street from Trump Tower in Miami Beach of all places.

It became noticeable to me early on that I was packing too much weight; not in my panniers, but on my saddle if you know what I mean. I lost seven pounds! I overheard my son telling his mom on the telephone, after a hard day, "Dad looks pretty beat up."

I have to say that the trip was a real blessing for a number of reasons. Not just because of the weather and exercise and the opportunity for my son and me to take the trip together, but because of what I believe God was showing me along the way - how real God is in each and every circumstance and the communion God desires that we have with him. But along with that, God impressed upon me in a new way that the fields really are "white unto harvest".

Key West is a real Earnest Hemmingway sort of party town. Lots of tourists and lots of nightlife, and lots of people who show the effects. Nevertheless, the presence of God is there. As we prepared to cross the last bridge into Key West I noticed a small church off to the right of the road - Keys Presbyterian Church. I checked their website and found that they host "Keys Evangelistic Ministries" on a weekly basis in Mallory Square, sharing the gospel with all who will stop and listen. I sent the pastor an email the other day only to find out that he had once been a member of the CCCC. I promised to pray for his work there.

Our final night before driving back home, Ian and I drove down to Miami Beach for a bite to eat. As we walked along Ocean Boulevard, I was struck by the contrast between affluence and destitution, yet both equally lost without Christ. The next day as we drove to North Carolina I found my heart breaking for those who are without the hope of the gospel.

In the midst of our location here in western Massachusetts and in the business of our routines, our field of vision can become somewhat narrowed. I believe God allowed me to escape the routine for a short season to catch a glimpse of the bigger picture. We are called to our "Jerusalem", but we have Judea and Samaria at our door, and God's Kingdom encompasses all of it. The question is what does he want us to do? And do we have a burden, a passion for what he wants us to do?

I am happy to be back in one piece, although tropical weather is rather appealing this time of year. But I have to warn you, I come back with a deeper burden for the gospel in the Berkshires. We have in our backyard children and young people, adults and seniors who need to hear the word of truth. *How are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?*

Pastor Tom Bridgman





GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Valentine's Day Breakfast



All ladies (young and mature) of the church are invited to attend a Valentine's Day Breakfast here at the church on **Saturday, February 13th, at 9:00 a.m.** Please join us for this annual event put on by the men of Grace Church to honor the women of Grace Church. Please feel free to invite a friend!

Women of Grace



The next meeting of the *Women of Grace* will be at the church on **Saturday, February 20th from 10 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**, including lunch. Our theme for the year is "When Life and Beliefs Collide: How Knowing God Makes a Difference." This month's meeting will include a DVD by Sinclair Ferguson on "Loving Your Enemies". All women and teenaged girls are invited to join together for a time of study of the Scriptures, discussion, prayer, fellowship, and lunch. It is helpful for those preparing food to know if you plan to attend. There will be a sign-up sheet at the back of the sanctuary, or call Cheryl Lanoue at 413-528-2052.



Congratulations!



Congratulations to **Nadine Kulberg** on achieving finalist status for a Fulbright Scholarship! Twenty-two applicants remain, and eleven will be chosen. Pray for Nadine as she sits on pins and needles for at least two months awaiting the final decision. If chosen, Nadine will go to Greece for nine months to do research in music. If you wish to send her a congratulatory note, her address is: 32 Madison St., West Harrison, NY 10604

New Home, New Address

Congratulations to **Gary and Sorina Higgins** on the completion of their new home after many months of hard work. They were pleased to finally be able to occupy their new home by the first of the year. Their new address is:

Higgins' Croft
509 Rhodes Road
Kutztown, PA 19530

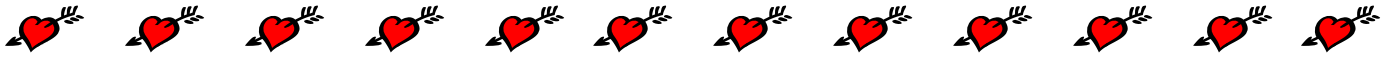


Encouragement Needed



During these sometimes dreary days of winter, let's remember to encourage one another. Send a note, bake some bread or cookies, invite for tea, make a phone call, or do whatever suits your style and the need. It's amazing how encouraging a simple act can be.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25



February 2010



<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>S</i>
	1	2 7:00 Elders' Meeting	3 7:00 Bible Study & Prayer	4 7:00 Addictions Victorious	5	6
7 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	8	9 7:00 Elders' Meeting	10 7:00 Bible Study & Prayer	11 7:00 Addictions Victorious	12	13 9:00 a.m. Valentine's Day Breakfast



Missions Corner

A Note from Tuvia Zaretsky *Excerpts from his October 2009 newsletter*

Shalom and thanks to all at Grace Church Congregational for your partnership in reaching Jews for Jesus. Ellen and I are grateful for your faithful support of our ministry.

The Jewish High Holy Days are always a highlight of the fall season.. It is a season of heightened spiritual sensitivity in the Jewish community. So we anticipate more opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions of the gospel during the *Days of Awe*.

Just before Rosh Hashanah, I was on the campus of a college where a large percentage of students are Israeli and Iranian Jews along with Jewish kids from the local community. When I finished handing out a full bag of broadsides, I went into the cafeteria to rehydrate and cool off. A student, who evidently noticed the Jews for Jesus logo on my shirt, approached me and politely asked if I had time to talk. He described himself as a "traditional" Persian Jew. He had so many wonderful questions about Messiah and the Bible. He was remarkably honest and transparent about his uncertainties. We discussed Messianic prophecies from Isaiah 53 and 9:6. He agreed that the rabbinic sages had an anti-Christological bias in their exposition of those passages. Ramin came away curious to study the Bible for himself Please pray that the Lord will open his understanding to the truth of Jesus revealed in the Scriptures.

I went back to the college the following week. The first tract I offered was rejected by a young man who said, "I'm Jewish, and I don't need that." I detected an accent, so I asked in Hebrew if he was from Israel. He quickly came back to engage in conversation. His name was Eli. At first, he was pretty cynical, but that quickly gave way. Evidently, a few years ago, Eli had called out to the God Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was seriously interested in knowing the truth about Yahweh, even if it led him on the path to Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will convict Eli of the truth and set him free.

Outreach and intellectual engagement with Jewish seekers is a joy of this work. Training others to do it too multiplies the message. So, this month I've also appreciated having two weeks to train our newest missionaries in New York City. They are a passionate and enthusiastic group of young people from the U.K., Canada, Ukraine, Israel and the United States. It is a huge joy to invest in their lives. Please pray that the Lord will send along more of these enthusiastic candidates for missionary service. This is an exciting time to see Him work among young people.

Yours in our Messiah,
Tuvia Zaretsky

A Note from Dr. Bob and Judy Long

Dr. Bob and Judy Long would appreciate prayers as they are currently enroute to Nairobi Kenya to be part of the Member Care team of encouragement and counseling to those attending the Christian Medical and Dental Association Continuing Education meetings. They ask prayer for health, stamina, and spiritual freshness that they might be able to minister effectively to those the Lord brings their way. They will be away until mid-March, and ask prayer for a tight plane transfer in Amsterdam on their way home.

Spiritual Growth Opportunities

Several opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship are coming up in the months ahead.

- ◆ **Upper Valley Bible Conference, Saturday, March 6, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.,** Valley Bible Church, White River Junction, VT. Topic: **God's Heart for the Church.** Some questions that will be explored are: What is God's plan and purpose for the church? How does the church function in the life of a member? What does community look and feel like in the church? Speaker: Dr. David Powlison. Cost: \$20-25. For a registration form, see Charleen Bridgman, or go to <http://uvbc.wordpress.com>
- ◆ The annual **FaithLift** (for women), **April 10, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.** Hope Church in Lenox. Theme: **At Any Age, At Any Stage: Celebrating the Christian Life.** Speaker: *Friends of the Heart* -three women who share God's love through testimony, drama, and song. The day will include the opportunity to fellowship with women from congregations throughout the area, elective workshops, and a catered lunch. Cost: around \$30 (includes lunch) Registration information will be available later this month, or go to www.pittsfieldefc.org
- ◆ The annual **OPC Women's Retreat** will be on **Friday and Saturday, April 17-18,** at Lakeside Christian Conference Center in Pittsfield. Theme: **Spiritual Metamorphosis: Change, God's Assignment for Growth.** There will be a special session for young women. Registration information will be available later this month.
- ◆ The Spring meeting of the Eastern New York/Western Massachusetts Congregational Fellowship, April 17. Theme: Addressing Church Conflict Proactively. Registration and more information will follow later.
- ◆ Conservative Congregation Christian Conference **Annual Family Conference, July 26-29,** Sheraton Hotel, Springfield, MA. Theme: **Completing the Works God Has Prepared for Us to Do.** Registration and more information will follow at a later date.

New Members

We look forward to **Sunday, February 21st**, when several individuals will be officially joining our church family! The following have completed the New Member classes and we look forward to welcoming them.

Toby and Jessica Logsdon

Douglas Rose

Timothy and Julie Ross

Ian Bridgman

Learning & Arriving:

Occupied With Joy

“As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger. Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. Eccl. 5:15 – 20.

When I think about how much I love to worship and sing praises to the LORD each Sunday, I find it hard to fathom how many Sundays in my otherwise misspent life I failed to spend my time worshiping Him. As for prayer – how many days and hours and minutes of my life have been squandered and wasted without contemplating His presence in my heart? In our lives as Christians together – how many weeks and months have gone by that we have stood alone, outside of the warmth and grace and light of the Christian countenance on the faces of our brothers and sisters in Christ?

“Who am I?” I so often ask the LORD. “Why have you brought me this far?” We are going to take nothing that we may carry away in our hands, in spite of all our toil. As we came, naked and alone, helpless and crying, so shall we go.

All we can possibly do is to help some other poor pilgrim along the way. The toil in which we need to rejoice is the toil set upon us by Jesus – to carry His cross to Calvary. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” Mt. 16:24 -26. This is the gift of God – to love Him and to love one another as Jesus loved us. Carrying His cross is helping, loving, and sharing each other – selflessly, charitably, trustingly, without reservation or doubt. Carrying one another's cross in this life is our occupation with the joy of Christ's love in our hearts.

So let us pray as a Christian family, a congregation of worshipers:

God, heavenly Father: lead us to Christian love;
Bring us into the light of love. Keep us from the cold loneliness
Of heartache and distrust; bathe us in the warmth of companionship,
Heartfelt love, and eternal trust in You.
Let us live life in the love of Christ and with the love of Christ,
With our true Christian companions, forever.
This we ask through our Savior,
And by His Holy Spirit. AMEN!

Doug Rose