

A decorative header featuring a row of musical notes at the top. Below the notes on the left are three golden crosses, with two more faint, overlapping crosses behind them. To the right of the crosses is the title "Grace Notes" in a large, bold, black serif font. Another row of musical notes is positioned at the bottom of the header section.

Grace Notes

Grace Church Congregational
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever! Amen."

Ephesians 3:20,21



From the Pastor's Desk

, ...and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19)

Just recently I found myself reflecting on the number of times Paul uses the word "know" in his prayers for the saints. Try counting the number of times for example in Ephesians and Philippians when he writes about his prayer for the believers in these two cities. Paul is not alone. Jesus uses this word also on numerous occasions. In his "high-priestly" prayer recorded in John 17, for example, Jesus prayed, *"And this is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."* What does this mean?

Over the past year I have found myself asking the question, what does it really mean to "know" Jesus? When I sensed a call to ministry and went back to college to study the Bible almost forty years ago, I had no doubt that I was where God wanted me. I was desperate to sink my teeth into something solid. The Bible and theology absolutely came alive for me in a way that it hadn't up to that point. The experience only intensified during my seminary years. I was like a starving man sitting down to a big turkey dinner.

I guess I'm pretty good at theology now, although admittedly not as good as some, (I think of some of my former professors and favorite authors) and I think I'm OK at biblical exegesis. But if Jesus were to sit down for coffee with me at Starbucks for a couple of hours, or if he were to take a long road trip with me in my truck, just the two of us, what would he say to me? What kind of questions would he ask me now?

I'm not minimizing the value of theology by any stretch; if I had to do it over again I would not hesitate to do the same thing, but I also know that the Pharisees were also pretty adept at Bible study and theology as they knew it, yet Jesus was pretty adept at pointing out to them the missing component.

You see, Jesus might just say to me, "It's just you and me, Tom; just the two of us. I know you." Along with that would he not also say, "I love you."? And that's a really staggering thought, isn't it. Think about it. To know Jesus is a whole lot bigger than all our formalities and pretenses. Somehow it seems to me that this is what Paul is saying when he writes, *"...to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."* Yet this is Paul's prayer for us- that we may really "KNOW" the love of Christ. And he prays this for us because he knows that this is a growing thing in us as we grow and mature in Christ.

As many of you know, I have been praying for revival. I began a number of years ago to pray for revival in our nation. Then I began to pray more close to home, that we might experience revival in our community. Then I began to realize that maybe we need revival in our church. Then I began to think, perhaps I need it in me.

Well, I guess I do. I guess we do. ...to know the love of Christ.
Think about it.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



Missions Corner



News From Susan Stone in Romania *excerpts from December 2011 newsletter*

Greetings from Romania,

Preparing Students for following Christ at work:

As usual I've been making semesterly visits to 9 different student groups around the country, meeting with last year students and grads. Last May the newest crop of Bucuresti Grads received certificates honoring and thanking them for their years of growth and service in the Bucuresti student movement. Nine of these have participated in various activities preparing them to be salt and light in the workplace.

Equipping Grads for following Christ at work:

We tend to be "schizophrenic" about our Christian life- being and acting one way at church and with Christian friends, and another way at work. A lot of what I do is helping grads think through truths they already know in their heads, and help them apply them practically to their work situations. We discuss practical steps in responding in a Christlike way to difficult co-workers and ethical issues at work.

Mobilizing Professionals for following Christ at work:

There are various ways that Christian professionals can work together to have a greater witness and impact in their workplaces and professions - building friendships with each other and with co-workers, outreaches using their professional expertise to serve the community, taking practical steps to address ethical issues in their field, to name a few. Mihaela invited a group of her Christian and "seeker" friends to a Women's Day get-together. I led an evangelistic talk translated loosely "the wonderful essence of woman".

A Crossroads Year

We did a major evaluation of the ministry asking "What does God want from this generation of young professionals in Romania?" We determined the "Need of the Hour" to be the creation of a discipleship course (Bible studies, discussions, prayer partners, practical applications and projects) geared for the Eastern European workplace. The grads who would participate in this course would form a national community (connected by a website with resources, news, etc) from which could be mobilized national groups based on profession. We will try it out on small "guinea pig" groups of grads from around the country, get feedback, and hope to finish the final version by the end of the summer.

Other Ministry Roles and Activities

I continue to have a role on the national leadership team of the student movement, helping with national projects and conferences. In September we held our first 10-day training school for Discipleship Group Leaders. With all my traveling I've been making a brave attempt to keep connected with my church's young adult group- going to meetings, singing in the choir, and participating in outreaches.

Coming to U.S. in February

This February I will be coming back to the US on home assignment until June. It has been over 3 years since my last one and I will be needing to raise a good chunk of monthly support as well as cash to make up for a deficit I've run up with InterVarsity. I'd like also to raise funds for the publishing of our Discipleship series, professional conferences, and traveling expense for national leadership meetings.



GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Congratulations!

Happy Anniversary to Peter and JoAnn Kulberg who celebrated 39 years of marriage on December 27th. **Happy Birthday** also to Peter who celebrated a significant birthday on December 28th!



Annual Meeting

Tuesday, January 24th, at 7 p.m., is the date for our annual business meeting. Please join us as we look back and look ahead, and seek to discern God's leading for our congregation.

Women of Grace

All women and teenaged girls are invited to the monthly Women of Grace Fellowship on **Saturday, January 14th**, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Join us for a time of Biblical nurture, discussion, prayer, and fellowship over lunch.

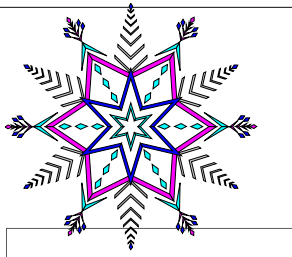


Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men of the church are invited to join together for a time of prayer and fellowship **at the church, on Saturday, January 21st, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.** Coffee and refreshments will be served.

Women's Retreat Opportunities

- ♦ **NECCF Women's Retreat:** for women of 4C's churches in New England. **Friday evening March 9 - Saturday March 12.** Theme: "House Beautiful"- "And in His temple all cry, "Glory!" Psalm 29:9 Location: Holiday Inn, Tewksbury, MA MA. Hotel cost \$75 per room. including breakfast. Retreat cost: \$70 (includes Friday ice cream sundae bar and Saturday breakfast and lunch). **Registration deadline:** full payment must be received by **February 15.** For registration forms or more information see Charleen Bridgman.
- ♦ **Faithlift:** a non-denominational women's retreat sponsored by the Evangelical Free Church. **Saturday, March 24th.** Location: Hope Church in Lenox. Registration packets will be available in February.
- ♦ **OPC Women's Retreat. Friday and Saturday, April 20-21. Theme:** Redemption as told in Isaiah, and learning how to study a large book of the Bible. Speaker; Dr. Kathleen B. Nielson. Additional workshops on 1) honoring and caring for aging family members 2) encouraging one another in times of sorrow and joy 3) hymns of redemption. Brochures and registration information will be available in mid-January.



January 2012



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1 <i>New Year's Day</i> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 5:00 Prayer Gathering	2	3 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class	4	5 7:00 Addictions Victorious	6	7
8 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	9	10 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class	11	12 7:00 Addictions Victorious	13	14 10 am-1 pm Women of Grace
15 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	16	17 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class	18	19 7:00 Addictions Victorious	20	21 7-8:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Fellowship
22 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	23	24 7:00 Annual Meeting	25	26 7:00 Addictions Victorious	27	28
29 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	30	31 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class				

Learning & Arriving: Resolutions

by Doug Rose

New Year's Day - Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving Hell with them as usual.

Mark Twain (1835 – 1910)

My slate of New Year's resolutions this year has but four line items: confess, repent, forgive, and love. Without the grace of God, the love of the Savior, and the power of the Holy Spirit these resolutions will be impossible to keep, as left to my own merit I would, as Mr. Clemens suggests, be simply using these devices as building blocks for my own destruction, for *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Genesis 6:5.

As to confession, we know and believe that *When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the LORD, and that person realizes his guilt, he shall confess his sin that he has committed.* Numbers 5:6 – 7a. Moreover, *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.* Proverbs. 28:13.

As to repentance, if we repent with all our mind and all our heart and pray to God for forgiveness, then God will hear in heaven, His dwelling place, our prayer and our plea, and He will maintain our cause and forgive His people who have sinned against Him, and all our transgressions that they have committed against Him. 1 Kings 8:48 – 50a.

As to my forgiveness of others, Jesus teaches, *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,* Matthew 6:14 – 15, and the apostle, Paul, wrote, *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* Colossians 3:12 – 13.

Finally, as to love, Jesus commands, *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* John 15:9-12

A simple enough agenda for the New Year, is it not? We can only achieve our objectives by submitting in faith to the power and the glory of God's grace at work in us: *To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 Thessalonians 1:11 – 12.

Let us pray together that we each and all will confess, repent, forgive, and love in this *anno Domini* 2012.

PeaceMeal

The Best Way to Ruin an Apology

by Fred

Barthel

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other... Ephesians 4:32

The best way to ruin a confession is to use words that shift the blame to others or that appear to minimize or excuse your guilt. The most common way to do this is to say, “I’m sorry if I’ve done something to upset you.” The word if ruins this confession, because it implies that you do not know whether or not you did wrong. The message you are communicating is this: “Obviously you’re upset about something. I don’t know that I have done anything wrong, but just to get you off my back I’ll give you a token apology.”

Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*
by Ken Sande, Updated Edition (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2003) p. 127.

Food for Thought

How often does “if” show up in your confessions?

A great way to ruin your engine on your car? Never, ever change the oil. A sure-fire way to ruin your credit rating? Never, ever pay your bills on time. What about ruining your reputation at work? Never, ever keep your appointments. And the best way to ruin a confession? Each and every time, use the word “if.”

Ken reminds us of the power of this little two-letter word. Too many times, it leads to an empty confession. All the words may be right and proper (I’m sorry), but the heart is missing. And anything without a heart is usually dead, good for nothing. The word “confess” means “to agree with” — you’re agreeing that you’ve done something wrong. If you’re not ready to agree, then don’t confess. Because that ruins everything.

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Resolving Everyday Conflict

An excellent resource for living out the Christian life in the area of relationships is our current **Adult Sunday School Class**. The winter quarter class is “Resolving Everyday Conflict”, using the book, workbook, and video by Ken Sande, the founder of Peacemaker Ministries. Led by Elder Bob Kirkman, the class is thought-provoking, convicting, challenging, and very encouraging. Join us at **9:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings** as we strive to apply the truth of God’s Word to our daily lives.