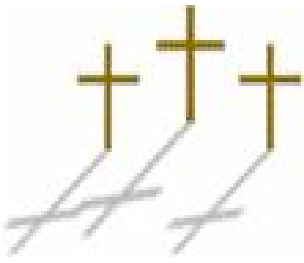




Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Volume X, Issue 6

July 2011

Welcome to the July edition of the Grace Church newsletter. If you have any suggestions or submissions for the August newsletter, please send them to secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net





From the Pastor's Desk

Now there were in the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers.... While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

We have in the life of Grace Church a momentous occasion. We are commissioning Eve to serve in a distant land. We should not underestimate the significance of this for her, or for us.

Eve is a child of Grace Church. She has attended here since she was a child and joined our church as a teenager. She has participated in our Sunday Schools, VBS, and has led our younger children in drama. We have observed her through studies at the BICS and at Nyack College. We have witnessed the call on her life to work in a foreign land, and how she has faithfully pursued the necessary steps to make that possible. So when we lay hands on Eve, we recognize the call on her life.

For many of us, we might think, "Oh no! Eve is too young; the situations that face her are too dangerous, or we need her here to help us in all the many ways a young woman can contribute to the here." But I remind you, that if she is called, we must rejoice with her in that calling and commit ourselves to supporting her in any way we can.

We should not be surprised. Just look at the history of Grace Church. How many young people been called from our ranks throughout the years? George Carnevale, Dieter and Shelley Schmidt, Susan Stone. These are but a few, not to mention the short-termers who have participated in various work trips—enough to seem out of proportion for a church our size. We committed ourselves to the support of a family before we ever called our first pastor, and the very first man (Don Lundgren) to stand behind the pulpit of Grace Church was a seminary student headed for the foreign field. This is our history. It is also an indication of our priorities.

How I wish we were a larger church with more resources to work with. A few years ago Park Street in Boston made the decision to support each of its workers for the full amount of their need so when they were on home assignment they wouldn't have to spend all their time and energy seeking to raise their support. Some debate the benefits of such an approach. It is in the least an admirable gesture. It certainly speaks to the priority they place on their commitment to each of their workers. That in itself should be an example for us—that we do not just wave Eve off at the airport and wish her well, but that we take seriously our responsibility to man her lifeline with encouragement, and yes, financial support while she is abroad. It also strengthens the connection that we as a congregation have with the work in which she is involved.

This is indeed a momentous occasion for Eve, but also for us as a congregation. Thank you for answering the call, Eve.

Pastor Tom Bridgman





GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Then Jesus told them a parable to show them that they should always pray and never give up. Luke 18:1

Prayer Gathering

Please join with us as we go before the throne of God seeking His direction and provision for our ministry in the community, and interceding for one another. We will meet in the sanctuary on **Sunday, July 31st, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.**



Men's Prayer Fellowship

Men of all ages are invited to be a part of the Men's Prayer Fellowship which meets monthly year-round. The next gathering will be Saturday, July 16th, from 7:00-8:30 a.m. at the church. Join us for a study of Psalm 51, prayer and fellowship. Light refreshments will be served.

Commissioning Service

In recognition and affirmation of God's to serve Him, a special commissioning service will take place at the church at **2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 10th.** We gather to celebrate our hopes for this work, while seeking God's blessing on this venture and each person involved.



Ministry Opportunities

- ♦ **Operation Christmas Child-** Our church will once again be a relay center for Samaritan Purse's annual collection of gifts for children around the world. This will involve staffing the church with volunteers during certain hours the week before Thanksgiving (Monday - Sunday afternoon). We will receive shoeboxes from people in the area, and pack them into larger boxes which will be picked up and transported to Northampton. This is a wonderful opportunity to play a larger role in an effective ministry, and to increase our exposure in the larger community. Interested in volunteering and/or finding out more? Speak to Charleen (499-3040).
- ♦ **Greeters-** Friendly faces are also needed to take a turn at greeting incoming worshippers and handing out bulletins on Sunday morning. If you think you would enjoy this, please speak to Charleen (499-3040) so that you may be added to the rotation.
- ♦ **Church Cleaning-** Just a few individuals are carrying the burden of keeping the church clean and presentable for all of us. Please consider lending a hand. Grab a friend or family member and share the load! See Elder Tom Ross for a list of cleaning duties.

Encouragement Needed

As many of you know, Jim Crawford-Harris, the husband of Charleen's sister, lost his battle with cancer on June 17th. He leaves behind his wife Annette, and two young children, Jesse and Rebekkah. They all need our continued prayers. Cards of encouragement may be sent to: Annette Crawford-Harris, 5 Francis Ave., Wynantskill, NY 12198





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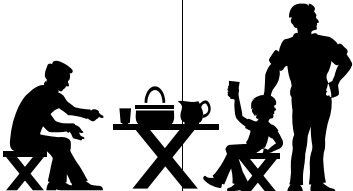
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10 10:00 Worship 2:00 p.m. Commissioning Service	11	12	13	14 7:00 Addictions Victorious	15	16 7:00-8:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Fellowship
17 10:00 Worship	18	19	20	21 7:00 Addictions Victorious	22	23
24 10:00 Worship	25	26	27	28 7:00 Addictions Victorious	29	30
31 10:00 Worship 5:00 pm Prayer Gathering						

Vacation Bible School Praise

We are so thankful for God's blessing on our VBS this year. A total of 27 children came through our doors, with an average daily attendance of 24. We are so thankful for the many hands who participated in so many ways, with many people doing multiple tasks including teaching, recreation, crafts, helping in the classroom, snack preparation, registration, transportation, purchasing, publicity, music, skit, memory coach, child control, and general floaters. Twenty-six of us had a wonderful time of working together in the exercise of various gifts to the glory of God. Three children expressed a desire to have Jesus in their hearts. Pray for God's continued work in their young lives. We had an excellent turnout for the VBS picnic on Saturday with parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles. Quite a few lingered and visited for over an hour. Continue with us in prayer for the long-term impact of the week in the lives of the children and their families, in the lives of those who participated, and in our community.

Heartfelt thanks to the following people:

Emily Graham: kindergarten teacher/skit
Chavaleh Kirkman: kindergarten teacher/skit
Jessica Logsdon: primary teacher
Sharen Senecal: classroom aide
JoAnn Kulberg: primary teacher
Betty DeNoble: primary co-teacher
Betty Barbour: junior teacher
Ruth Kirkman: classroom aide
Ian Bridgman: junior teacher/music/skit
David Towne: classroom aide/registration
Ruth Graham: classroom aide
Brenda Wright: craft coordinator
Hunter Parks: craft assistant/ recreation
Maddie Lanoue: skit sets/recreation

Cheryl Lanoue: snack lady/prizes/memory
Eunice Ross: snack lady
Margaret McBurney: snack lady
Rachel Bridgman: floater
Grace Lanoue: floater
Tom Ross: memory/ picnic
Tom Lanoue: publicity/picnic
Toby Logsdon: picnic grillmaster
Louise Carron: picnic
Linda Poulton: picnic
Tom Bridgman: set-up, transportation,
picnic, and encourager to
Charleen Bridgman: VBS Director

But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Luke 18:16"



Missions Corner

News from the Carnevals



LEARNING AND ARRIVING: THE PLEDGE OF SAFETY

In Isaiah 36 – 38, Hezekiah's kingdom was invaded, his rule disenfranchised, and his capitol besieged; the king's army had defected and the people were starved. Hezekiah was living in "a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace" (Isa. 37:3). Though the Assyrian siege waned, another Babylonian threat waxed, and "Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death" (Isa. 38:1). Hezekiah's world was caving in around him. Isaiah told the king to set his house in order, as he would not recover and doom was imminent, so Hezekiah "turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, and ... wept bitterly" (Isa. 38:2).

These past several months I have had my face to the wall, as I turn from disenfranchisement and divorce, financial siege, emotional starvation, abandonment by a friend and sister, and days of distress, rebuke, and disgrace. I have been sick at heart, at the point of despair, and I have wept bitterly. "Please, O LORD," I cry, like Hezekiah, "Remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight ... My eyes are weary with looking upward. O LORD, I am oppressed; *be my pledge of safety!*" (Isa. 38:3, 14b).

Despite our troubles, we can be assured that Jesus Christ is our pledge of safety, and He will remember our faith by His grace. As God answered Hezekiah's lament, and shortened the shadow on the sundial of Hezekiah's life, so does our Savior answer our prayers and reset the ticking clock on our days of despair. When we cry, "Oh restore me to health and make me live!" our LORD, in His divine and unsurpassed love, delivers our lives from the pit of destruction, and casts all our sins behind His back. (Isa. 38:16 – 17). For this I know, through the faith granted me by His Holy Spirit,

"The LORD will save me, and we will play my music on stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of the LORD." (Isa. 38:20).

Notwithstanding the pain, I am still singing and playing music, and Jesus, by His atoning love, will save us all. It is only for our welfare that we have great bitterness. (Isa. 38:17).

Doug Rose