

# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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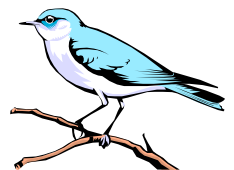
*June 2012*



*"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." Psalm 103:13*

**Happy Fathers' Day**

*"Honor your father..." Exodus 20:12*





## From the Pastor's Desk

*We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,..., since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of truth of the gospel, which has come to you, ..., and is bringing forth fruit;.... (Colossians 1:3-6)*

As evangelical Christians we all affirm that the cross is the means by which God has given us salvation. Yet do we have any sense as to the role it plays in our sanctification? Peter writes in his second epistle, [God's] *divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness... For whoever lacks [the above mentioned] qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. (2 Peter 1:3, 9)*

The Bible tells us that we are separated from a holy God by our sin. We have no hope of attaining to God's requirements of perfection by ourselves. All our human endeavors to justify ourselves as are "filthy rags" as Isaiah reminds us. It took God's initiative to send his own Son to die in our behalf to satisfy God's just demands. That's the gospel – that Jesus paid it all.

Yet the question remains, does our appreciation of the cross of Christ increase with each passing day during the course of our Christian walk? What happens, and we see it all too often, is that we minimize the importance of the cross in our Christian walk. This often leads to a legalistic approach to the faith in which we begin to believe that God is satisfied with the mere mechanics of religiosity. And this typically goes hand-in-hand with pretending that we are more spiritual than we really are. We reduce God's holiness and lessen the offense of our sin. And the cross shrinks. If the significance of the cross does not grow larger with each passing day, then our faith is destined to grow cold, stale, and superficial.

The consequences are great, both for us as individual Christians but also for us as a church. If the reality of the cross isn't increasing in us as a church then the effects are felt in all three areas of ministry within the church – worship, nurture, and outreach. When the cross is large in our thinking, then we appreciate what a remarkable privilege the worship of God really is. Through the death of Christ we have been given access to the very throne room of God. That's a cause for celebration! Apart from the cross, we are merely going through religious motions. How boring!

A similar thing can be said about the mandate to nurture those who are less mature in the faith than we. Because of the cross, we have been adopted by our heavenly Father. He is patiently teaching us to live as sons and daughters. The church is a community, a family of disciples growing into maturity in Christ. Apart from a clear understanding of the gospel, the church is only a human organization and less mature Christians are only tolerated so as to provide a nose in the pew and a few dollars in the plate.

Lastly our appreciation of the cross has a real bearing on our motive for evangelism. Do we share the gospel with others out of an infectious spirit of joy for what Christ has done for us, or do we do it in the spirit of Jehovah's Witnesses knocking on our door, hoping to win some marks with God? Or worse yet, perhaps we are under the notion that man in the jail or that young person with multiple tattoos does not deserve God's grace.

See the importance of having a large cross?

Pastor Tom Bridgman





# Missions Corner



## News from the Schmidts *from their May newsletter*

Dear Friends,

We arrived in Switzerland early enough to watch leafless trees start filling out with fresh green growth. The joy of observing gardens shine forth with crocuses, daffodils tulips and now lilacs has helped against the tiredness we came with. After being here for two months we are starting to feel rejuvenated. God has placed us in a convenient little apartment near Dieter's aging parents and his sister. Surrounding us are fields and snowcapped mountains.

While we are on Home Assignment we are praying that we find the right balance between ministry, meeting with family and friends and rest and renewal. We travel by train to the different OMF prayer groups around the country. The speaking falls mainly on Dieter, the fluent German speaker of the family). Being around German all the time does wear Shelley out, so we are thankful to find fellowship at an international church nearby.

We are excited about new opportunities to share about Japan in the next few months. One of these is the chance for Dieter to participate **in our village's protestant church service, May 20**, a first in all these years. Also, on **May 26-28 we will be at the OMF Pentecost Weekend. June 9, our friends (from our youth group in 1988) will host a Japan Afternoon**. We hope many friends from those days will come. A big challenge ahead is hosting the week-long retreat for parents of missionaries and supporters of OMF, June 23-30, at a hotel.

As we look ahead to our time in the State, please pray that the Lord would provide an economical car for all the traveling will have to do. **We are also looking for places to stay or to housesit:** September and December in Chattanooga; October and November in Western Massachusetts. Please let us know if you hear of anything.

### **Praise the Lord with us:**

- for the beauty of His creation that exclaims His Glory -for the encouragement we get meeting so many prayer warriors.
- that the ESF group is going well and they are working together. We are thankful that new people have started coming!
- for the Stolls taking over for us at the Guest House and doing a great job keeping things running!
- that Hannah has a renewed contract to teach English in the Japanese Middle Schools in Sapporo, and that her help at ESF is a blessing.
- for the provision of jobs for Andrea and Rebekah too; they will continue in their teaching posts.

### **Please lift up these requests:**

- for the continuing need for God's grace on the land of Japan, for open hearts that lead to new life.
- for us to have energy, joy to communicate well at churches and house group meetings, and for some to consider giving their lives to service overseas.
- for meaningful times with Dieter's family (reunion is June 3).
- for our meeting with the OMF Home Council as we review the past years' service, May 12.
- for details to work out as we plan our time in the USA.
- for our support team, prayer, and finances to increase. (Support for us has been quite low lately).

In God's hands,

*Dieter and Shelley*



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## Summer Schedule



The last day of Sunday School will be June 3rd. Beginning on **Sunday, June 10th**, we will change to our summer schedule. For the duration of the summer **worship will begin at 10:00 a.m.** Sunday School will resume in the fall.



## Women of Grace

There will be a get-together on **Saturday, June 9th, from 10:30-12** for the purpose of finishing our discussion of the book *Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World*. In the fall we will resume our fellowship but in a different format. All women are encouraged to continue in Bible study and fellowship during the summer months in informal ways.



## Men's Prayer Fellowship



Men of all ages are invited to join together for the Men's Prayer Fellowship, **Saturday morning, June 18th, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.**, at the church. Come for a time of devotional on Psalm 51, and for prayer. Light

## Third Thursdays Outreach

Please keep in prayer our outreach opportunity downtown during "Third Thursdays" this summer. We have reserved a booth so we may introduce ourselves to the wider community. Several folks stopped by last month and some good conversations took place. Pray for wisdom and discernment on the part of the elders and others who man the booth. Stop on by and say hello! "Third Thursday" this month is on **June 21st, from 5:00-8:00 p.m.**

## Prayer Gathering

All are encouraged to join us as we seek God's guidance and His provision for the welfare of our church and our ministry in the community. A time of corporate prayer will take place on **Sunday evening, from 5:00-6:00 p.m. on June 24th.**



## Spotlight on Students

Emily Graham completed her program at Berkshire Community College in May, receiving a Certificate in Massage Therapy and Bodywork. Congratulations, Emily!





# JUNE 2012



S M T W T F S

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<b>3</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship <b>5:00 Missions</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 10:30-12:00 Women of Grace book discussion
<b>10</b> 10:00 Worship	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 7:00-8:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Fellowship
<b>17</b> <b>Father's Day</b> 10:00 Worship	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>  Summer begins	<b>21</b> 5:00-8:00 Third Thursday Outreach 7:00 Addictions	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 10:00 Worship <b>5:00-6:00p.m.</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 9 am - 12**



## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

### The King Is Coming!

**Dates: June 26-30 (Tuesday-Saturday)**

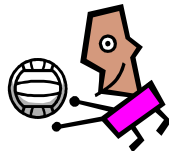
**Time: 9:00 a.m.-12 noon** (Saturday there will be a closing program followed by lunch for the children and their families).

**What? Songs, skits, Bible stories, crafts, recreation, and snacks**

**For Whom? Children entering kindergarten through children completing 4th grade**

Help us get the word out. We have flyers and invitation postcards available. If you know of families with children, grab some flyers and pass them on! If you know of a place of business where you might be able to put up a flyer, ask if you can put one up. You can also let Charleen Bridgman (499-3040) know of names and addresses of families with children and we will see that invitations are mailed out.

Please be praying for the staff that we will be well-prepared and ready to serve the children and their families. Pray for the families who will be sending their children, that they would be blessed. Pray that Jesus would be exalted and that lives would be transformed through this outreach.



**HAPPY FATHERS' DAY!**  
JUNE 17th  
Thanks, Dads, for all that you do.



## LEARNING & ARRIVING: *To the End of the Earth!*

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

(Acts 1:8)

*But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men ... I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice ...*

(Acts 5:34 – 35 & 38 – 39).

As we finish our 2011 – 2012 adult Sunday school classes for the term, we are poring over and sifting through the evidence of the Resurrection to show to one another and to the skeptical world the Resurrection proven. Jesus announced to the apostles whom He had chosen that they would be His witnesses. Their words and their deeds, and the descriptions of the events they experienced first-hand are recorded for us in the Gospels and in Acts, and in that first-century journalism, we have been given all the proof we need in hand. The apostle's witness to us is our testimony to the world, and in so knowing this proof of His Resurrection,

*... we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*  
(1 Corinthians 2:7 – 8)

One of the rulers of that age, the Sanhedrin member, Gamaliel, wisely advised his council, however, that the evidence he had weighed indicated that if Jesus was truly the Messiah no earthly power, be it the Jewish theocracy or the Roman civil authorities, could overthrow His movement. How sage was this advice, for twenty-one centuries later, Christian identity has spread from a few dozen disciples in an imperial colonial backwater to more than 2.3 billion adherents in every land and in every place from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. The power of the Gospel proof of Jesus's Resurrection has led us (and almost one in every three of the denizens of this planet), by grace, to the faith in our salvation at the foot of His cross.

## A Note from Eve

Dear Friend,

On a gloriously sunny May 9<sup>th</sup>, my best friend's son, three of his friends, and I wandered along Nevskii Prospect with carnations to give to WWII veterans. The whole of Russia celebrated Victory Day with parades and honoring the elderly of their country who experienced so much.

Watching a group of young people attentively crowded around one gentleman, to hear his war stories, reminded me of where the Scriptures say, "Stand up in the presence of a person with gray hair, show respect for the old; ... I am *Adonai*." [Lev. 19:32] I love Russia.

Our orientation time has finished, so these are the last days I have in Russia. Treasuring each moment of glorious spring with dear friends, I pray that I will use this time well. "And pray for me, too, that whenever I open my mouth, the words will be given to me to be bold in making known the secret of the Good News... Pray that I may speak boldly, the way I should." [Eph. 6:19 & 20] These days seem to be full of deep conversations and opportunities for more.

June 5<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, I plan to take a ten-day trip to explore a potential language opportunity south of the Caucasus. Our linguistic teams would all really appreciate prayer for this trip, the language groups, and the area.

Particularly, wisdom is needed to see if I would be an effective, good fit in the language projects of this region.

Thank you for uplifting this work and all of the lives and countries involved.

Peace in His dear love,

Eve

## An Encouraging Word -from a Letter from InterVarsity

God is changing lives: students are coming to faith in Jesus: 15 undergrads in Northern Illinois; five at Goucher University in Maryland; four international students in the Blue Ridge region; 50 fraternity and sorority students at InterVarsity's Greek Conference in Indianapolis —from across the county in the last semester alone we've seen a total of 1,700 new believers!

Here's what God is doing at the University of California, San Diego:

"We just hosted our annual freshman retreat. Over 100 freshmen came; 20-30% were seekers. Our two student speakers, both sophomores, delivered amazing messages and gave a call to faith—19-year-olds preaching and giving calls to faith! Eight people gave their lives to Christ for the first time. Praise God."

This is the Good News. This is why we're on campus. And this is what God, by His grace, is doing through InterVarsity's ministry.

Alec Hill, President