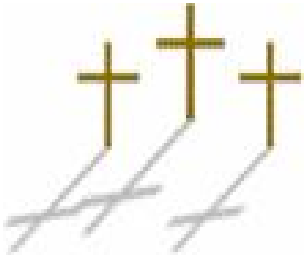




Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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November 2011

Happy Thanksgiving!



Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever. Psalm 136

Welcome to the November edition *Grace Notes*. Please send any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter to secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net.



From the Pastor's Desk

Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday. ...Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. (Psalm 37:5-8)

Last week was an eventful week. Perhaps I should write that in capital letters. Our daughter, Rachel delivered a baby boy (Cody James O'Marra) by C-section. The next day Rachel's mother-in-law was in the emergency room, Liam came down with a fever, and Rachel, while putting her bathrobe on in the hospital, threw her shoulder out of socket. She waited 4 ½ hours in excruciating pain until the Orthopedic Surgeon knocked her out with the same drug that killed Michael Jackson and put her shoulder back in place. Meanwhile one of the men in the church accidentally sank two nails into his leg with a nail gun.

The next day they opted to send baby Cody to the neo-natal ICU at Baystate Hospital in Springfield because of possible complications. The day after that Charleen transported Rachel to Springfield to be with her baby. When I arrived a couple of hours later I found that thieves had smashed the window of our car and stolen our GPS, in broad daylight just yards from the main entrance to the hospital. I have to confess, I found myself feeling a little overwhelmed by it all.

There was the anxiety over the welfare of my daughter and grandson, and concern for Dave, our carpenter. But what was especially difficult was sitting in the NICU at Baystate Hospital, holding my grandson for the first time – marveling at the miracle of a new life, and yet harboring emotions that bordered on rage against the perpetrators of what I saw as a personal violation. Such conflicting emotions were unsettling. When I took my walk on Sunday morning before breakfast (which is part of my Sunday morning routine) I even found it hard to pray. “Lord, I have to stand before the congregation in a few hours and open your Word for them, yet I have visions of broken noses in the hospital parking lot. What do I do?”

It is easy, I suppose, to so spiritualize our Lord Jesus Christ that we keep the personal impact of his crucifixion at a distance. We might think that Jesus, because of his divinity, was above the wrenching emotions of the injustice done to him. Yet as we read in the Gospels of his groans and cries from the cross we realize that such was not the case. What heartache the Father must have felt as he heard his Son's cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” What conflicting emotions our Lord must have experienced as he watched men gamble for his only possessions. Yet even here in the midst of his agony he could pray between gasps of air, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Well, all's well that ends well. Mother and baby are home now and doing well. Dave, our carpenter, is recovering from his surgery. Even the window on the Honda has been repaired. The security people at the hospital were exceptionally supportive. And we'll just have to leave the thieves and the GPS in God's hands.

Can we really say there are no accidents in God's economy? That was certainly true for Jesus' crucifixion. But it is also true for us as well in our everyday lives. If all things really work together for good (Romans 8:28), then that means everything and not just the things that fit our agenda. God is a Sovereign God and we belong to him.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



Missions Corner



Schmidt's Prayer Letter from Japan October 25, 2011

“Why did God make me different from the Japanese Kindergarteners I go to school with?”

This is a question from the son of one of our African English Speakers. His mom was able to tell him how God made him so special, sharing from the first lesson of the **Parenting Course** Shelley just restarted. It is for English speaking moms, and last week 6 came! Four were Japanese married to foreigners, one Korean married to a Japanese (the only non-Christian), and one Ethiopian mother.

Great East Japan Earthquake/ Tsunami Update:

Thank you for praying for Dieter and the three OMF missionaries who went to help with some building projects. The main project was to build a wall to divide up a large room into two, and to build bunk beds to accommodate volunteer groups better. At another house for volunteers, they were able to take up an old rotten floor, and build a solid new one. No more holes to fall through! One afternoon they got to visit Japanese who now live in temporary housing compounds. Dieter even played his Swiss accordion at a café set up to encourage people to come out and talk. As people go visit these folks, they hear questions like one woman asked, “Why me? Why did I survive? There must be a reason, but what is it?” Many cannot get over their guilt over surviving. Pray for those who go to help, that they would be able to answer these questions by the help of the Holy Spirit and pointing people to Jesus.

A group of volunteers from our church followed Dieter's team. Two of the ladies who went gave haircuts to evacuees. It was special to hear their report of how the faces of those that came to the temporary salon changed from one of gloom, to bright smiles at the result, because someone showed they cared.

After Dieter returned from Miyako, we were able to go **visit Rebekah in Jakarta!** We found Indonesia to be so different from Japan, that we had some culture shock. This trip has helped us understand her new situation better. To see where she lives, meet her new housemate and friends, visit her church and school has made such a difference and helps us to pray more specifically. We are thankful to see Rebekah settled and thriving. Dieter and I also got to enjoy some days on a sunny island to celebrate 30 blessed years of marriage! We praise the Lord for a wonderful trip and a refreshing time away!

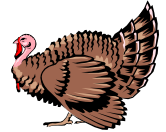
Back in Japan, we hit the road running, with a busy schedule, a full Guest House and an **International Welcome Party** to plan. The Party went really well. We are so thankful for the ESF group working together. The games and fellowship were fun, and the food plenty. Out of the 49 adults that came 23 were newcomers! We praise the Lord for some of those that have already found their way to our ESF fellowship group on a Sunday afternoon. Keep praying for spiritual growth for all who come!

In a short four months from now, we will be going on **Home Assignment!** Please pray for us as we need clear direction for where to live in two countries, for suitable transportation, for our deputation schedule, etc.! Mid-February we will be going to Switzerland, then in the summer to the USA. There is a long list of things to get done and to organize before we depart. We are so thankful that a couple from Florida, the Stolls, will come take care of the Guest House while we are gone! Pray for them as they prepare to come to Japan at the end of January.

Going His Way,
Dieter and Shelley
schmidtdieter@omf.net



GRACE CHURCH NEWS



New Arrival

We give thanks for the safe arrival of Cody James O'Marra on Wednesday, November 2nd, at 8:29 a.m. Cody is the grandson of Pastor Tom and Charleen, and son of Tom and Rachel (Bridgman) O'Marra. We are thankful for God's watchcare over Cody as he spent a little time in the ICU at Baystate Hospital. He arrived home on Monday, November 7th. Mother and baby are doing well, and big brother Liam is



Operation Christmas Child

Thanks to all who are offering to take part as we serve as a Relay Center for Northern Berkshire County for the second time. We will be open to receive filled shoeboxes from the community during National Collection Week. We will be collecting from **Monday, November 14 to Sunday, November 20** during the following hours:

Monday- Friday 3-5 p.m., Saturday 12-5 p.m., and Sunday 1-4 p.m.

Please consider being part of this ministry as a cookie baker, box carrier, recorder, packer, or loader. For more information call Charleen Bridgman, Relay Coordinator, at 499-3040.

Come on out and be a part of this wonderful ministry of Samaritan's Purse to deliver gifts and the message of the Gospel to children all over the world!



Men's Prayer Fellowship

Men of all ages are invited to be a part of the monthly Men's Prayer Fellowship **Saturday, November 19th, from 7:00-8:30 a.m.** at the church. Join us for a time of Bible discussion, prayer, fellowship, and light refreshments.



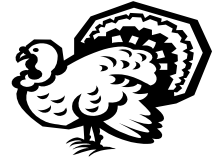
Prayer Gathering

Our monthly prayer vigil will be held in the sanctuary from **5:00-6:00 p.m.** on **Sunday, November 27th.** All are encouraged to come together in prayer before the Lord as we acknowledge our dependence on Him in all things.





November 2011



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

		1	2	3 7:00 Addictions Victorious	4	5
6 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	7	8	9	10 7:00 Addictions Victorious	11	12 10a.m.-1:00 Women of Grace 
13 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	14 Operation	15 Christmas	16 Child	17 Collection 7:00 Addictions Victorious	18 Week	19 7:00-8:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Fellowship 
20 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	21	22	23	24 Happy Thanksgiving! 	25	26
27 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 5:00 Prayer Gathering	28	29	30			

Learning & Arriving: Forgiveness

“...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12)

I seem to spend most of my professional efforts chasing or staving-off debts in the world of commerce. I often characterize my law practice as one of “applied economics” – the adjustment of monetary balances due to or owed by my clientele as a result of commercial transactions. I make my living in an economy of debits and credits, working in a legal system designed to enforce this fiscal commodity known as “debt”.

In the Scriptural economy, the ancient Israelites were constrained by the covenant law of Moses to forgive each and every monetary debt every seven years: *“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD's release has been proclaimed. Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release.”* (Deut. 15:1-3). Nehemiah reminds ancient Jerusalem of this obligation when he exhorts the returning exiles that *“... we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.”* (Neh. 10:31).

In His recitation of the LORD's prayer, Jesus reminds the apostles and His modern disciples of God's covenant law that we forgive one another these earthly debts, as God has forgiven us the insurmountable debts we owe Him as a result of our fall into sinfulness and apostasy. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”* (1 Jn. 1:9-10). Jesus Himself paid our debt, so that we might be given a release from eternal damnation, by His atoning self-sacrifice at Calvary. *“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”* (Col. 2:13-14).

As we wallow in the transactional economy of this fallen world, let us be mindful to forgive one another not just petty monetary imbalances, but to forgive as well those perceived injustices and transgressions among us which raise our sinful ire, knowing that God has forgiven us from His holy wrath through the payment of our eternal debt by our crucified LORD.

Doug Rose