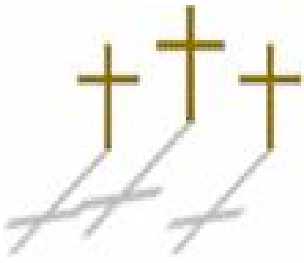




# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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*October 2011*



Welcome to the October edition of the Grace Church newsletter. Any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter may be sent to [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net) or placed in the tray on the secretary's desk.



## From the Pastor's Desk

*For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. (1 Corinthians 9:16-17)*

I think of all the personalities in the Bible, and I resonate with the Apostle Paul the most. It might be because of my bent for theology, but I think it has more to do with Paul's clarity of vision and his passion for Kingdom ministry. That clarity of vision is reflected in the verses above.

We're working our way through First Corinthians for the autumn months. Paul was responsible for starting the church at Corinth while on his second missionary journey. He had other ministries that required his attention, yet he carried with him the ongoing burden for the welfare of the Corinthian church. It is plain to see that the Corinthian church was fraught with problems. Some were of a serious moral nature that compromised the church's fellowship with Christ. Others had to do with more run-of-the-mill bickering and squabbling that threatened to sideswipe the fellowship and divert their attention from the mission at hand. Along with that there were even those within the Corinthian church that felt the need to call into question Paul's calling and authority as an Apostle of Christ. For Paul, all of these things generated a distraction from the primary task at hand - the proclamation of the gospel and the advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Yet what we see is that Paul is the incessant optimist. He is convinced of God's Sovereignty and grace, and he stands without wavering on Jesus' promise to build his church in such a way that the gates of hell would not interfere with his Sovereign purpose. He reflects a faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the Corinthian church from immaturity to maturity.

Sadly, the Corinthian church was not unique; otherwise this letter would have been written strictly as a personal letter to that local body and not included in the New Testament. These are issues in every church and in every age. Every church has problems. Churches have moral issues that arise among its members. Sometimes these are serious enough to warrant the exercise of church discipline. And churches have fractures between its members too— conflicts that arise between differing personalities or because of competing agendas.

What is behind such problems in the church? Well, sin, in the final analysis. This is especially true when it comes to serious moral issues. But in what way is it sin when it comes to competing agendas or personality conflicts? These types of things are driven by several things that have to do with a faulty view of the church.

What happens is, if we don't get our own way, we take it personally because we feel we have something to lose and our sense of personal validation is at stake. We forget that the church is really Christ's church rather than ours, which leads to an over emphasis on our local institution at the expense of the Kingdom, which in turn leads to a narrower and narrower view of the church.

This is where we see the contrast in the Apostle Paul. Like John the Baptist when his followers left to follow Christ, declared, "[Christ] must increase, but I must decrease.", Paul writes in Philippians, "*But whatever gain I had, I counted loss for the sake of Christ.*" (Phil. 3:7) Is it not this very sentiment that is behind his words in Corinthians 9 - indeed in the whole of the epistle? It's not about us but about Jesus.

That is why he challenges us to "put childish ways" behind us. It's Christ's Kingdom, and there is way too much at stake.

Pastor Tom Bridgman





# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## Prayer Gathering

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16  
The congregation is earnestly encouraged to come together on **Sunday, October 9th, from 5:00-6:00 p.m.** for a time of corporate prayer. The hour will be spent entirely in prayer (silent and spoken), and Scripture reading. Join us as we acknowledge our dependence on our Heavenly Father and earnestly seek His face, His guidance, and His provision.

*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Psalm 127:1*

## Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men are invited to join together for a time of fellowship and prayer on **Saturday, October 15th, from 7:00 - 8:30 a.m.** at Grace Church. They are using Paul Tripp's book, *Whiter than Snow: Meditations on Sin and Mercy*. Light refreshments will be served.



## Ladies' Bible Class

The Tuesday Afternoon Ladies' Bible Class will resume on **October 11, at 1:15 p.m.**, at the church. The group will be using John MacArthur's book *God's Presence during Hardship: Daniel and Esther in Exile*. All ladies are welcome!

## Women of Grace

On **Saturday, October 15th, from 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.**, the Women of Grace Fellowship will begin a new year. We will be reading through the Gospels along with *Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World*, by Rebecca Pippert. This year we will also have "Out of the Box" events- opportunities for inviting friends outside the church to take part with us in social, cultural, or community events. So join us as we study, discuss, pray, fellowship together over lunch, and reach



## Operation Christmas Child Speaker

Pastor Daniel Kumar and his wife Melinda have been involved with Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child in Trinidad since distributions began there in 2001. They will be speaking at **St. Agnes School in Dalton on Friday, October 21st, from 1:00 -2:00 p.m.**, and at **College Church in Northampton on Monday, October 24th, at 6:00 p.m.** Come and hear what God is doing to transform the hearts and lives of children in Trinidad because of a simple shoebox gift, packed with love. For more info contact Louise Brown at 413-584-6514 or [ouisimimi@aol.com](mailto:ouisimimi@aol.com)



## LOOKING AHEAD

## Daylight Savings Time Ends

This year, Daylight Savings Time ends as of 2 a.m., **Sunday, November 6th**. Be sure to turn your clocks back one hour on **Saturday night, November 5th**.





# October 2011



*Sun*

*Mon*

*Tue*

*Wed*

*Thurs*

*Fri*

*Sat*

						<b>1</b>
<b>2</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship <b>5:00 Prayer Vigil</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 7-8:30 am Men's Prayer Fellowship 10 am-1 pm Women of Grace Fellowship
<b>16</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>31</b> <b>Reformation Day</b>					

# Missions Corner



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD *A Ministry of Samaritan's Purse*

It's that time of year again! Time to prepare our Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes. Millions of children around the world will experience Christmas joy when they receive gift-filled boxes and hear the Gospel through Christian literature and follow-up discipleship programs. Upon completion of the program, graduates receive their own copy of a New Testament. What starts out as a simple gift--a shoe box containing toys, school supplies, and toiletries--is used by God to transform the hearts and souls of millions of children and their families.



**This year, for the second time, Grace Church will be serving as the Relay Center for Northern Berkshire County.** That means people from around the county will be bringing their packed shoeboxes to our church during **National Collection Week, November 14-21**. Please consider participating in this wonderful ministry. Besides packing a shoebox, you can serve as a volunteer at our Relay Center. Opportunities for service include:

- ♦ Greeters
- ♦ Cookie Bakers
- ♦ People to help carry packed shoeboxes into the church (**young people encouraged to apply!**)
- ♦ People to help pack the shoeboxes into larger boxes for transport to Northampton
- ♦ Strong arms to help load the larger boxes onto the transport truck
- ♦ Record keepers to log the number of boxes brought in each day, and from whom

To sign up and to get more information, please speak to Charleen Bridgman(499-3040), or email to [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net)

### HOW TO PACK A SHOE BOX

1. Use an empty standard size shoe box, or a small plastic container. Pray for the child who will receive your gift.
2. Decide whether your gift will be for a boy or girl, and the age category: 2-4, 5-9, or 10-14.
3. Fill with gifts. Gift suggestions: school supplies, toys, hygiene items, other items such as hard candy, T-shirts, socks, flashlights with batteries, etc.
4. Include a personal note to the child and a photo of yourself, if desired.

**Do not include:** Used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures; chocolate or food; out-of-date candy; liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items such as snowglobes or glass containers; aerosol cans

5. Please donate \$7 or more for each shoe box to help cover shipping and other project costs. You can give online at [samaritanspurse.org/occ](http://samaritanspurse.org/occ) and find out later where your shoebox went!

Last year, in 2010, Operation Christmas Child touched the lives of over 8 million children in over 100 nations.

Won't you help spread the joy?

## **Learning & Arriving: Jesus Sang Out the Psalms**

ON THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM  
PEOPLE SPREAD OUT THEIR CLOAKS  
AND COVERED THE ROAD WITH PALMS  
THE CROWD WENT BEFORE HIM  
SHOUTING LOUD HIS PRAISE  
AND JESUS SANG OUT THE PSALMS

IN THE UPPER ROOM  
WITH HIS CHOSEN TWELVE  
HE DISPELLED THE DISCIPLES' FEARS AND  
QUALMS  
THEY ATE THE LORD'S SUPPER TOGETHER  
AND JESUS PRAYED FOR THEM  
AND JESUS SANG OUT THE PSALMS

JESUS SANG OUT THE PSALMS  
AS HIS DAILY PRAYER  
LET US ALL SING OUT THE PSALMS TOGETHER  
AND THE VOICE OF JESUS WILL BE THERE

WHEN HE HUNG ON THE CROSS  
BETWEEN THOSE TWO THIEVES  
WITH NAILS IN HIS LEGS AND ARMS  
IN THAT HOUR OF DARKNESS  
OUR SAVIOR CRIED ALOUD  
AND JESUS SANG OUT THE PSALMS

*Doug Rose (c) 2011*

## *Growing Up to Tell the Truth in Love*

*Out of the Salt Shaker & into the World...* you may have found this book a surprising choice for the women's fellowship. I certainly did! I confess, my concept of evangelism has occupied a rather small room. But this spring, as we studied *Gospel in Life: Grace Changes Everything*, God threw open the doors and I began to see evangelism with a new and fresh perspective. The NT uses 'evangelist' to mean 'a bringer of good tidings' similar to our concept of missionary. Yet here in the Berkshires, our encounters are, for the most part, with those who have a notion of the Gospel that ranges from being distorted to completely inaccurate. We may relate more to Jesus' interactions with Samaritans. How did Jesus deal with the woman at the well? What was He teaching when He cast a Samaritan man in the leading role of His parable in Luke 10? Simple answer: He showed us what it means to love your neighbor. Isn't this what evangelism is at its core? Tim Keller has said, "*Radical Gospel neighboring requires a love that cannot be a response to a requirement, but a response to free grace. Only when you see the True Neighbor and what He's done for you will you become a true neighbor to others.*"

*God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love--like Christ in everything.* (Eph. 4:15) (The Message) The truth of the Gospel radically changes our interaction with people. God sent Jesus into the world with a message and a mission. Jesus has sent His people (Jn. 17:18) out to "tell the truth in love." You see this in Jesus' instructions to the twelve as He sends them out in Matt. 10, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give." Even before Christ's atoning death and glorious resurrection grace was breaking out! The message of the Kingdom of God was then and is now, clothed in the gorgeous dress of kindness, mercy and love. "*God sent a man, His son, to communicate the message. His strategy hasn't changed. He still sends men and women -before He sends tracts and techniques- to change the world. You may think his strategy risky, but that is God's problem, not yours.*" (Rebecca Pippert)

In the opening pages of her book, Rebecca writes, "*I had to learn from experience what Scripture teaches in 1 Thess. 2:8: to share the gospel we must share our life, our very selves. If we don't grasp that Christ has freed us to be authentic, we will see evangelism as a project instead of a life style. And we will see non-Christians more as objects of our evangelistic efforts than as authentic persons.*" We're afraid to be poured out - we're reluctant to share our lives. But Jesus dispels our fear for He has gone before us, showing us by His Word and Life how to live. In Matt. 5:3-12, He teaches us about the character of people who are indwelt by God; poor in spirit, mournful for sin, meek, merciful...and with each description proclaims these are the truly blessed, the truly satisfied, the truly happy. James Boice wrote that the Beatitudes are a portrait of Christ Himself; He can be identified with each of the characteristics. He goes on to teach, „You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world..." We can't live in isolation! "*(Christians) are to manifest these characteristics in the world. And what is more, they are to practice these things in a way that will affect the world positively, as salt affects the medium to which one applies it.*" (Boice)

Rebecca asks, "How can we relate to people in a way that will change the world? Jesus did it in two ways: by his radical identification with men and women, and by his radical difference." This is impossible on our own. We will either „radically identify. and become absorbed in the culture or become obsessed with our „radical difference. and become isolated. Only by abiding in Christ can we live this „radical. life. God has built His church, the Christian community, to be the place where we will be encouraged and held accountable in the spirit of love to live this kind of gospel centered life.

In summing up his chapter on the influence of Christians in the world, John Stott wrote in *The Living Church*: “Here then is the call of Christ—to a greater righteousness (a righteousness of the heart), to a wider love (a love of the enemy), and to a nobler ambition (God’s rule and God’s righteousness). Only then will our salt retain its saltiness and our light its brightness, so that we will be salt and light to the world. We need in particular to repent of our pessimism. Christians have no business to be pessimists. Faith and pessimism are incompatible. To be sure, we are not starry-eyed idealists; we are down-to-earth realists. We know well that sin is ingrained in human nature and in human society. We are not expecting to build a utopia. But we also know that the gospel has transforming power, and that Christ has commissioned us to be effective salt and light in the world. So let us offer ourselves to God as agents of change. Let’s not excuse ourselves by developing a minority complex!”

I’m excited about this discussion and hope many of you will join us. I pray that God will use our study to continue His transforming work in our lives. May God renew our love for Him that we might share it with others. “I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you’ll be able to take in with all Christians the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.” Eph. 3:17-19 (The Message)

Cheryl Lanoue

**Mission Update from Bob and Judy Long**  
*excerpt from October 1st email*

*Editor’s note: Bob and Judy Long left in September for a 7 month trip to Asia providing care and counseling to missionaries in the field.*

Judy: "Counseling has kept me very busy. Most of the clients are cross-cultural workers from surrounding countries, as far away as the Middle East and Central Asia. They come for vacation and counseling care. Most of them want to meet for 2-hour sessions, every day or every other day, for the duration of their stay. Actually, I like that level of intensity, as people seem to heal faster and there isn't the lag between weekly appointments. It is exhausting for the clients, and for me! Pray that I can keep my heart tuned to each one as we work together to bring healing and restoration."

We leave for Taiwan and the all TEAM Han Chinese conference on 8 October. We hope to network and spend time with each of the missionaries from China and Taiwan during our time there. Please pray for our "Divine Appointments" while there. From Oct 22 -26 we will go to the hospital in Taitung where we used to work. I have the opportunity to give the message in our TEAM church on Sunday, 23 Oct and in the hospital Chapel on Wednesday, 26 October. Thanks for praying I will be God's messenger.

Thanks also for your continued prayers for our adjustments living in this "foreign land", for driving and orientation, for Judy's counselling appointments, and for her work visa (which she "needs" to do even volunteer counseling at the center) which we are going to **try** to process while in Taiwan.

We greatly appreciate your being coworkers with us in ministry during these 7 months in Asia. Blessings,

Bob and Judy

[boblontw@gmail.com](mailto:boblontw@gmail.com)



