



Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Volume XI, Issue 10

October 2012



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 or placed in the tray on the secretary's desk.



From the Pastor's Desk

For whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1 Corinthians 11:29)

As I write this for the newsletter, we as a congregation are gearing up to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This is something we do the first Sunday of every other month, and is always a highlight of our corporate worship. We sit quietly after the sermon and reflect on the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when he had taken bread at the Passover meal and broke it saying, "This is my body which is broken for you," and then he passed the cup, saying, "this is the cup of the new covenant poured out for the remission of sin." It is an opportunity for us to contemplate the essence of our salvation and our identity with Christ.

But why can't we do that alone every time we sit down to a meal, or have our devotions, or at any other time? Why do we do it in a public worship service with other members of the church?

Paul, throughout his letter to the Corinthians, expresses his concern about the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthian church. They were characterized by squabbling and bickering, a spirit of one-upmanship and competition amongst each other. Even their celebration of the Lord's Supper reflected their sinful attitudes. Without church buildings they met in the larger homes of the wealthier members of the congregation. Those of lesser means were left outside if there wasn't enough room inside. So when it came to the Lord's supper, those outside were able to partake only if there was any left over. As Paul states, "...it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat." (11:20) That is because the attitude in which they participated ran counter to the very heart of the gospel.

When Paul wrote, *whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself*, we normally think Paul is referring to the body of Christ which was hung on the cross for us. Yet there is a strong indication that Paul is actually referring to the church community here. How many other times in the same epistle does he refer to the congregation as the body of Christ? If nothing else, it is very likely that Paul is at least making a play on the word "body" here.

I'm afraid that our 21st century culture is not that far from the culture of the Corinthians. We pride ourselves on our individualism. That is fine in our economic system I suppose, but it makes for a challenge in terms of how we do church. It really is crucial for us to see ourselves as the "body" of Christ – a living, thriving community of people who are bound together by virtue of our identity with and union with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are accountable to one another and for one another. What a difference our witness would make if the unbelieving culture around us saw us as such.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



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 third 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, Monday, November 12-Monday, November 19.** 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

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 samaritanspurserg.org/occ and find out later where your shoebox went!

Last year, in 2011, Operation Christmas Child touched the lives of over 8 million children in over 100 nations. This year they hope to reach the 100 millionth child since 1993, with the Good News of God's love.

Won't you help spread the joy?



God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with loving-kindness."

Jeremiah 31:3b

God shows His faithfulness in so many ways! This rainbow photo was taken from Grace Church's lawn on Sunday, and it reminds us of God's promise that His work on this earth is not yet done. He continues to build His Kingdom. We thank the Lord for all you at Grace Church, His faithful servants.

To us, Grace Church is filled with fond memories. This is where Shelley's Dad and Mom served for 10 years. This is where we met in 1979, fell in love, married and decided that we would serve the Lord wherever He wanted. Our first child, Andrea was born in Pittsfield.

Now, we just finished a 3500 mile road trip visiting friends and supporters. It was such a blessing to have a chance to talk and pray with so many. We met with Mark and Bev Lawry, Keith and Beth Lawrence, Alan Fisher, and Ken and PJ Reever. They were all a part of our lives at Grace in the 70's and 80's. Since then, they have journeyed to other places, just like we have. We have been encouraged to see them reaching out wherever they are. These folk were all part of the "College and Career Group" that met at the time we lived in Pittsfield. God's grace has been poured out, and it continues to overflow, from Grace Church, to the ends of the earth.

We want to express our appreciation to Grace Church's faithful members- for all your prayers and for your sacrificial giving to help us continue to minister in Japan! Our journey brings us here for a short while. We hope to catch up with many of you and to have time to hear your story.

The Net

The net was there, around me,
and I understood it not.
It pulled and dragged and tugged me,
as I against it fought.

I pushed and thrashed against it,
the net, it was so strong.
Why did it want me anyway,
there were others in the throng?

My fractured life seemed lost,
beyond all grasping hope.
Tears no longer mattered,
I could no longer cope.

Tired now, I let it pull,
no fight was left to flee,
I saw, now much more clearly.
It was there, a help for me.

Surrendered now, I could look up.
I felt no more in harm.
The net was not a net at all,
but my Father's loving arms.

I am no longer who I was,
when first the net had drawn.
In newness He recreated me,
all that was old was gone.

He caught me in His net of loving-kindness,
and has drawn me in.
He has taken all my hurts and sadness
and made me new again.

His hands are strong and guiding,
His compassion pulls me in.
The net He holds, it will not break,
His love, it is within.

His word He put into my mind,
and in my heart a song.
The net, His loving arms, are open,
with Him I'll follow along.

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jeremiah 31:3b

LEARNING & ARRIVING: The Voice of My Prayer

by Doug Rose

*Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what He has done for my soul.
I cried to Him with my mouth,
and high praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But truly God has listened;
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.*
(Ps. 66:16-19)

God has truly listened and has attended to our prayers of praise, worship, and thanksgiving. We cry out to Him for intercession and in confession, for we know that it is by His grace alone we even draw breath enough to pray, and that He listens to every word and knows every thought. We shall never be disappointed when we seek Him in all sincerity.¹

Many Christians have come to accept that they do not find prayer easy and that they do not really understand what it does or can do.² The Psalmist tells us the answers to both of these quandaries: first, we must cry to Him whom we fear, and praise Him for what He has done for our souls; then, we must cherish Him and not the abounding iniquities of our hearts so that He will listen to us. When we realize that He already discerns our thoughts, is acquainted with all our ways, and knows our prayers even before the first word is on our tongues (Ps. 139:2 – 4), we learn that it is not merely our articulation of prayer that God seeks, but the fear and cherishing of Him in our hearts that both precedes and accompanies our prayers.

God is pleased by His grace alone to give us His Holy Spirit to assist us in expressing ourselves to the Father in prayer.³ God has also given us the Psalms as a model, design, and roadmap by which we can learn to pray. Those who learn to meditate deeply on the Psalms experience the supreme model of prayer that is provoked by God the Holy Spirit.⁴

Jesus taught us that we ought always to pray and not lose heart. (Lk. 18:1). Paul likewise tells the Philippians, *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* (Phil. 4:6)⁵. So, come and hear that He will attend to the voice of our prayers.

¹ Calvin, John, *Commentary on the Psalms* (David C. Searle, Trans.) (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust; 2009), p.316.

² Wright, N.T., *The LORD & His Prayer* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; 1996), p.4.

³ Sproul, R.C., *The Prayer of the LORD* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Reformation Trust; 2009), p.4.

⁴ *Id.*, p.5.

⁵ *Sunday School Syllabus*, Week 12!



GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Wedding Congratulations

Congratulations to Nicole Lanoue and Frank Vigeant, who are to be married Monday, October 8th, in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Nicole is the daughter of Tom and Cheryl Lanoue. Pastor Tom will officiate.

Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men are invited to join together for a time of fellowship and prayer on **Saturday, October 20th, from 7:00 - 8:30 a.m.** at the home of Doug Rose. They are using Paul Tripp's book, *Whiter than Snow: Meditations on Sin and Mercy*. Light refreshments will be served.



Ladies' Bible Class

On **Tuesday, October 16th**, the Ladies' Bible Class will begin a new year. The study this year will be on the book of Isaiah. Meetings are held every Tuesday afternoon, from 1:15-2:45, at the church. All ladies are welcome!

Special Missions Sunday

On **Sunday, October 21st**, we will be blessed to have two pairs of our missionaries with us: Dr. Bob and Judy Long, who serve in Member Care with TEAM, and Dieter and Shelley Schmidt, who serve in Japan with OMF. Dr. Bob will bring the morning message. A luncheon will follow, and then Dieter and Shelley will give a presentation of their ministry. Details on the lunch will follow in the bulletin, but mark your calendars and plan to attend and hear what God is doing through these servants who represent us in different parts of the world.



LOOKING AHEAD



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, November 4th, 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.



Daylight Savings Time Ends

This year, Daylight Savings Time ends as of 2 a.m., **Sunday, November 4th**. Be sure to turn your clocks back one hour on **Saturday night, November 3rd**.





October 2012



Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thurs

Fri

Sat

	1	2	3	4	5	6
				7:00 Addictions Victorious		
7 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	8	9	10	11 7:00 Addictions Victorious	12	13
14 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	15	16 1:15 p.m. Ladies' Bible Class	17	18 7:00 Addictions Victorious	19	20 7-8:30 am Men's Prayer Fellowship
21 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship Missions Presentation	22	23 1:15 p.m. Ladies' Bible Class	24	25 7:00 Addictions Victorious	26	27
28 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	29	30 1:15 p.m. Ladies' Bible Class	31			