



# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

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Welcome to the September edition of the Grace Church newsletter. If you have any suggestions or submissions for next month's newsletter, please send them to [secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net](mailto:secretary.gracecc1@verizon.net)





## From the Pastor's Desk

*...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.  
(Ephesians 3:10)*

I have been doing a lot of reflection as of late on what it means for us to be the church. That might seem like a given considering the fact that I draw my livelihood from the church, but it really is much deeper than that.

It seems to me that the church has become a secondary institution in our contemporary culture. Yes, I know that it is marginalized to a large degree by the secular world, but its status seems to be suffering at the hands of those of us who consider themselves a part of the church too. On one hand, for those who find little value in the historic gospel but still call themselves the church, it has become little more than an institution destined to seek meaning for itself by going through the motions of empty ritual. But for those of us who wear the name "evangelical", I fear that the church takes second place behind our personal experiences and expressions of our individual faith. This is evidenced by those who find little difficulty in hopping from one church to another to find what most effectively meets their needs. The Bible on the other hand places supreme value on the church evidenced by Paul's statement above.

The Greek word for church is "*ekklesia*". It is the word used in the gospels by Jesus after Peter had declared him to be the Christ. Interestingly enough that word is used more often in the Greek version of the Old Testament than it is in the New, typically in reference to those who are called together by as the congregation of Israel.

There are three important things this indicates to us: First, it means that the church is God's initiative. When God first called Abraham out of Haran and sent him to a new land he promised that from his seed would come a great nation. Abraham had grown up in a pagan environment. He had no access to the Scriptures, as the Scriptures did not come into existence until a half millennium later. Nevertheless, it was God who chose to exercise his initiative and begin the process. Centuries later God told Moses that he had remembered the covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was God's call that brought the descendants of Abraham out of Egypt and into a great congregation at the base of Sinai.

The church is also God's possession. The Lord declared, *I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.* (Leviticus 26:12) Notice the pronoun. It's possessive. Jesus declared, *"I will build my church..."* (Matthew 16:18) Peter, in reference to the church *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession..."* (1 Peter 2:9) The church belongs to Jesus Christ, not us.

Lastly, the church is God's mission. This means more than just God's initiative, but also God's continued involvement. Jesus said, *"I will build..."* When Jesus commanded his disciples to *"go and make disciples of all nations"* was it not a reflection of God's promise to Abraham that *"all nations would be blessed through him"*? There is a beautiful description of the church in Revelation 7:9-10, *"...I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and the lamb..."*

Paul tells us in Ephesians that the church is the stage upon which the wisdom of God is displayed for the whole universe to witness; angels and demons, Satan and Christ, and the whole world as well.

What a shame that we might take the significance of the church so lightly.

On a practical note, I will be preaching from 1 Corinthians throughout the fall which highlights the challenges and responsibilities of living within the church community.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



# Missions Corner



## Asia

### News from Bob and Judy Long

Dr. Bob and Judy Long report that they arrived safely in Asia on September 3rd. They will be in Asia for seven months until March 2012 to help fill the responsibilities of TEAM's Asia Regional Member Care Coordinator who is currently on home assignment. They write: "Please pray for:

- ♦ Physical, emotional, spiritual stamina and sensitivity and preparedness
- ♦ "Divine Appointments" with the people with whom we have contact during that time
- ♦ Daily spiritual filling so we may minister out of His strength, power, and fullness rather than out of our own limited resources.

Thank you so much for being co-workers with us these next 7 months! We thank God for each of you."

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

### **The Chinese Church and the Back to Jerusalem Movement**

*(excerpt from the Park Street Church missions newsletter)*

Today many Chinese Christians have the vision to reach western China and Muslim nations reaching all the way to Jerusalem. They believe that in the last days before Christ's return it is the duty of the Chinese church to take the gospel back to Jerusalem, in order to complete a full circle of the Gospel which was originally brought to them from the West. This vision was birthed in the 1920's, began to take shape in the 1960's, and finally found fruition over the last decades as God began burdening a cross section of Chinese church leaders with this same missions vision. "Hundreds of Chinese families are being trained to relocate to frontiers and minority regions of China," reported a Chinese house-church leader. Their vision is to send out 20,000 itinerant missionaries to reach the non-Han peoples of China and plant churches. God is giving the Chinese a vision to reach the Muslim world in a way that perhaps Western countries cannot. Cross-cultural outreach is still young in China, yet Christians there are praying continually about their role in reaching the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist nations with the gospel. Those involved in the Back to Jerusalem movement consider themselves to be "an army of broken-hearted Chinese men and women whom God has cleansed with a mighty fire, and who have already been through years of hardship and deprivation for the sake of the gospel... they are mighty warriors for Jesus." A couple from Park Street Church in Boston (a member of the 4C's) have been called to assist the Chinese in this work. Based in Southeast Asia, Andrew and Sophia have been called by their organization to the role of empowerment, mobilization, and instruction of new missionaries from China. Pray for them and for the Chinese church.



# GRACE CHURCH NEWS

## FALL SCHEDULE

Our fall schedule resumes on **Sunday, September 11th**, with **Sunday School** for all ages (age 4 through adult) at **9:30 am.**, and **worship** at **10:45 a.m.**. The adult class for the first quarter will be a study of the book of James, taught by Doug Rose. Study booklets are available for each participant.



## MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Men of all ages are invited to meet for a time of study, dicussion, and prayer on **Saturday, September 17th**, from **7-8:30 a.m.** at the church. Light refreshments will be served.



## PRAYER GATHERING

Our monthly prayer time for the ministry of our church will continue into the fall. Our next time of corporate prayer will be **Sunday, September 25th**, from **5:00-6:00 p.m.**

## CHURCH PICNIC AND SEND-OFF

All are invited to our church cookout on **Sunday, September 11th**, following the morning worship service. Our cookout is also a departure party for Eve Kulberg, who will be flying to Russia to begin her work in linguistics. Hot dogs, hamburgers, and beverages will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Invite a friend and join in the fellowship!



## ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Elder Tom and Eunice Ross, who celebrated 57 years of marriage on September 4th!



## AN INVITATION

The ladies of Hope Church invite the ladies of Grace Church to a Ladies' Tea to be held on **Saturday, October 1st, from 10 a.m. - 12 noon**, at Hope Church. Becky Taber Nicoll will speak on the theme of friendship. "Our hope is to serve the ladies in the Berkshires by encouraging one another through fellowship and knowing God through His Word. Bring your favorite tea cup and consider treating a friend to a morning of refreshment for the soul." Cost is \$5 per person. **RSVP by September 23rd** to 637-2212 or by email to [lenoxhope@aol.com](mailto:lenoxhope@aol.com)



## WOMEN OF GRACE FELLOWSHIP

On Saturday, October 15th, from 10:00 to 1:00, the Women of Grace Fellowship will begin a new year. This year's theme is: "Gospel Living; Gospel Praying; Gospel Fellowship." Romans 12:10-12 holds our theme verse: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction; faithful in prayer." We will be reading through the Gospels along with Rebecca Pippert's book *Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World*. We will also have "Out of the Box Events" - opportunities for inviting nonChrisitan friends 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 out to the world around us. For more information see Cheryl Lanoue.



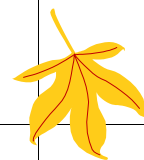


# September



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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1 7:00 Addictions Victorious	2	3
4 10:00 Worship				8 7:00 Addictions Victorious	9	10
11 9:30 Sunday School resumes 10:45 Worship 12:30 Church Picnic and Send-off for Eve	12	13	14	15 7:00 Addictions Victorious	16	17 7-8:30 a.m. Men's Prayer Fellowship at the church
18 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	19	20	21 <i>Eve Kulberg departs for Russia!</i>	23 7:00 Addictions Victorious	23	24
25 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 5:00 Prayer Gathering	26	27	28	29 7:00 Addictions Victorious	30	





## Spotlight on Students



Remember our college students as they begin their studies this fall. Pray for Emily Graham, Ally Lanoue, Maddie Lanoue, and Bill Wanamaker, that they would be diligent in their studies and diligent in their walk with the Lord, find good Christian fellowship, and grow in grace. Pray also for our younger students, that they too would grow in grace and knowledge this coming year.

### Original Covenant Signers

By Margaret Barbour

52 years ago a group of 13 Christians, (Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists), signed a Covenant agreeing to unite in the establishment of a new church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to be known as Grace Church. The evidence of God's blessing is all around you.

We began with 12 couples and their children, plus one bachelor:

Robert and Alyce Wanamaker, (now deceased)

George Tanigawa (now deceased)

Gustav and Edna Lind (now deceased)

Kenneth and Joan Dahl (address unknown to us)

Robert and Florence Turner (address unknown to us)

Walter and Adelheid Nordmann (Walter is known to be deceased)

Paul and Margaret Barbour (Paul is deceased)

We held our first Sunday School on East Housatonic St. in the Heart of the Berkshires Grange Hall, **September 2, 1959**. Don Lundgren was Pastor that day. He came from First Presbyterian Church in Schenectady, New York. The minister there, Dr. Herbert S. Mekeel, was our mentor, adviser, teacher, and guide. He came over many times to teach, encourage, and pray with us.

Soon after, two more couples and children joined with us, the Bridgmans and the Crawfords. Today we are blessed with our Pastor and wife from these two families.

The historians are attempting to place pictures of these people in our history book. We especially need information on the Turners and Dahls. Check the history book later to see the results.

Let us all continue by God's grace to keep this Covenant.

*Editor's Note: see the following page for a copy of the covenant*

## Learning & Arriving: The Watchman

In Ezek. 33, God commanded us to blow the trumpet and warn the unrepentant world of the consequences of sin: *So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.*

Lev. 19 provides us with the “Golden Rule” such that our inaction in the face of sin is as much of a sin in God’s eyes as the sinner’s transgressions: *You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself ...*

In the same spirit, in Mt. 18, Jesus requires His believers to be the watchmen, the sentinels: *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

It’s hard to pay attention to sin in a sinful world. Sin is pervasive; sin is normative. We are conditioned to tune it out like so much white noise. We live in immoral and sinful times and it’s hard to be bold, and to be a disciple of Christ. It’s hard to speak out against sin. “*Go and tell him his fault*”, commands Jesus.

But do we? Do we rebuke the dishonest politicians? Do we rebuke the welfare and insurance frauds? Do we rebuke the Governor who wants to legalize and package gambling as a commodity? Do we rebuke legalized endemic and society-wide sexual immoralities? Do we rebuke the unholy but nationally-funded and underwritten practice of infanticide?

We are the watchmen! We are commanded to love them and to warn them – to blow the trumpet. Our duty as Christians is not only to live as Christians but to live *out* as Christians. By Jesus' command, we are *required* to go and tell them of their fault

If you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul, and if he listens to you, you have gained your brother for the kingdom of God.

*Doug Rose*

