



Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational
1055 Williams Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

Volume XVII, Issue 1

January 2018

Welcome to the January edition of Grace Notes

May your New Year be blessed with Grace and Peace

Email suggestions or submissions to secretary@gracecongregational.org





From the Pastor's Desk

*"...though the earth gives way and the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.... Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.
(Psalm 46:2, 10)*

It goes without saying, these are unsettled days on the national and world stage. We have a president that seems preoccupied with being front and center 24/7, while the news media rises to the bait and turns every word into a three-ring circus. We have lawmakers from both sides of the aisle resigning in self-disgrace, while the icons of the entertainment industry are self-destructing. All the while our commander-in-chief and the self-deified leader from Pyongyang delight in lobbing insults across the Pacific like ballistic missiles. In the words of Bob Dylan during the chaos of Vietnam, *"There's just too much confusion, I can't get no relief"*. What are we supposed to think? How are we supposed to feel? What are we supposed to do, especially as the church?

I can't help but believe that what we need more than anything else is a revival, a spiritual awakening that would rival that of the Great Awakening of the mid-1700's. I began to pray for revival in our land over twenty years ago, but I must confess, my prayers have become lack-luster, and while I have prayed, my faith that it could really happen did not match the effort. It is only recently that I have begun to believe that true revival does not begin externally but internally.

While we pray for a spiritual awakening in our nation and in our national leaders, we also need to recognize that it must start closer to home. It really must begin in our churches and in us personally. Along with that, we need to remember that true revival is not something that can be manufactured by our own efforts, but begins, rather, by God's initiative and is a result of the Holy Spirit acting both in and through us. It is never something that we can claim credit for. One of the results of personal revival, I believe, is an abiding trust in both God's immediate presence and his Sovereign control in whatever uncertainties we find in life.

I am convinced that it is especially during times like this that we are ripe for a move of God in our land. People are insecure. What does tomorrow hold, never mind the next year? People want to know that there is something we can hang on to. It is under similar circumstances that Peter writes, *"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, and always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have to anyone who asks..."* (1 Pet. 3:15) Do we have that hope? If we really believe the gospel, then we should. Is that hope evident in the way we respond to the uncertain circumstances of the day?

We, as God's people, should be able to exhibit a settled confidence, not in our political leaders, not in the stock market, not in our entertainers, but in the God who never changes. How do we do that? Only by focusing our gaze on Jesus Christ and his gospel. This is the reason that the church has always thrived during periods of tribulation.

Lord, bring revival to our land. Bring revival to our church. And bring revival to me. Remind us again that you really are God.

Pastor Tom Bridgman



Tuvya & Ellen Zaretsky January 2018 Update

I pray the Lord pours out the fullness of His grace and blessings on you and all with you at Grace Church Congregational. Ellen and I are grateful for your loving partnership in our Jews for Jesus ministry this past year. I'm refreshed after a vacation of rest and Christmas celebration with my family! I know it's cold in the rest of the country tonight, but I'm warmed to a rekindled passion for our ministry, introducing Jewish people to Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

The Billy Graham Center for Evangelism (BGCE) publishes a blog at Gospel-Life.net. I've been an invited contributor for a couple of years. So, I was incredibly honored when *Christianity Today* published my "guest" blog. You can still see what I wrote titled, "Wait...Christmas is Jewish!?" online at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/december/wait-christmas-is-jewish.html>

If you've followed my ministry reports, you know my enthusiasm about a hugely effective outreach opportunity through Jewish-Gentile Couples ministry. I'm so blessed to receive Hanukkah/Christmas cards from some of the partners that have come to faith in Christ through this work. Many of you prayed for Elliot Singer. His wife, Mary Lyn wrote, "Our cup is overflowing with God's wonderful grace! Praise His name on high and let the trumpets proclaim YESHUA is our Savior..." That gives me such *nachas* (Yiddish for "delight or satisfaction").

Also, in the last weeks of December, we partnered with another online ministry to test two outreach ads. Aimed at reaching Jewish-Gentile couples, the first one proclaimed, "You're the Majority!" You can view it at: <https://resources.jewsforjesus.org/cross-cultural-challenges/>

The second ad offered "A Free Resource for Jewish-Gentile Couples." I was *pumped* to hear 120 people responded positively to the test, asking for the free e-Chart showing the cross-cultural challenges in Jewish-Gentile relationships. Here's a link to a free copy of the Cross-cultural challenges chart. <https://ifj.box.com/s/pgsx472h8wk49h1l60526n26kjlzz8zp>

Our follow-up email offered the opportunity to speak with one of us by telephone. Forty people sent their phone numbers! Ten of those were Jewish people; some were not believers. The rest were Gentiles who are either in a relationship with someone who is Jewish or the parent of a child in a relationship with a Jewish partner. Finding new contacts is always difficult. These test results vindicate my belief that we have only begun to pick at a potentially fruitful entry point into Jewish-Gentile Couple ministry. Please pray with us for these contacts. I'll be calling the Jewish contacts this week.

I'm also honored to see the entire back page of the current January *Jews for Jesus Newsletter* devoted to Jewish-Gentile Couples resources. I hope you have an opportunity to see both the training workbook and the outreach booklet that are now available in the Jews for Jesus store. <http://store.jewsforjesus.org/2017-catalog/he-said-she-said-bundle.html>

Here are two immediate prayer items:

- **January 23 – February 1:** I will be in Odessa, Ukraine, to train our Russian-speaking mission staff in preparation for *Behold Your God Jerusalem* (BYG) this year. They are also traveling in from our offices in Russia, Kiev and Tel Aviv. After that seminar, I'll fly down to Tel Aviv for a few days to advise and train our BYG DAPH Team (DAPH: Drug addicts, Alcoholics, abused women/Prostitutes and Homeless).
- **David Brickner's February Letter:** Next month you will see a letter from David Brickner about an upcoming *Behold Your God campaign*. But we want you to know this BYG outreach, is the culmination of eighteen years of world-wide *Behold Your God* campaigns. This outreach is like nothing we've done before in terms of creativity, concentration of mission assets or the intensity of spiritual engagement. I hope you would be a prayer partner for the Behold Your God outreach.

Thank you for your generous support in 2017. We are grateful for your dedicated partnership in our passion for lost Jewish people. We thank the Lord for you. For Israel's sake, we won't be silent! (Isaiah 62:1)

Blessings in Yeshua throughout 2018, Tuvya Zaretsky

Schmidt News– December 2017

*He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.” Isaiah 9:6+7*

The door opens, the over 250 guests stand up, and step by step to the music of Canon in D, **with a beaming Andrea on my arm, we make our way to the front of the church toward the joyfully waiting groom.** Some start dabbing their eyes and I also have a hard time controlling my emotions. In front, I lift the veil, kiss Andrea, then lay her hand into Travis's and sit down next to Shelley. The ceremony continues with our faithful friend Steve Weemes officiating. **What joy to have so many close friends and family make their way to Atlanta to support and celebrate this special day with Andrea and Travis!** God granted a beautifully clear and crisp fall day for the occasion. We praise the Lord for a God-honoring wedding, with so many friends helping and pitching in behind the scenes to make it so special. While the newlyweds were on their honeymoon, Hannah, Rebekah and we had time in Chattanooga. We also celebrated Thanksgiving with Shelley's sister and family. Another highlight of the trip was little Revina's daily antics and smiles!



Arriving back to freezing Sapporo on Nov. 29, the Guest Home was already full with a team from Hong Kong on a vision trip. Will some of these perhaps hear the call to the harvest field?!

Sapporo International Church News: With our ESF group we had the joy of celebrating Christmas at our house on Dec. 10 with 23 adults and 8 children! On the 15th we celebrate with the Shakaijin Club, our easy English Bible Club for working people, and on the 17th, Sunday, our ESF group will go caroling, inviting passersby to the church's Christmas Celebration and Candlelight service on Dec. 24! Throughout Japan Christmas time is a great opportunity to spread the Gospel and speak of the true meaning of Christmas. Pray with us for God to call many into fellowship with Him.

As 2017 comes to a close we also want to thank you from our hearts for your faithful intercession for Japan and also for us. Thank you for contributing to our support, which makes our ministry here possible! We wish you a happy and blessed Christmas and may God's grace and joy be with you in the New Year!

Dieter and Shelley

Praise for:

- A blessed wedding
- Precious time with family and friends
- Accommodation and a car provided by Andrea's friends
- Problem free Guest Home operation in our absence
- Encouraging parenting class (next one Jan. 14)

Pray for:

- People's hearts to be open to the Good News
- New seekers from Christmas events
- ESF families to grow spiritually
- English Service and testimony time on Dec. 31
- Vision and smooth change over for OMF leadership in the Japan field
- Healing for co-worker Michelle going through chemotherapy now
- Health and protection during the winter months
- God to call 50 full time and 150 short term new OMF workers to the Japan field by 2020

Hope in the Storm

by Cheryl Lanoue

Jesus told us, “In the world you will have tribulation.” Growing up in rural America it has been easier for me to keep His words at arms-length. For my younger self, war, unrest and violence have always been in foreign places. Today, my older self finds it very different; the fallenness of this world is relentlessly breaking in upon my mind like the waves in a storm. Disasters flash in red banners across my computer screen demanding attention: the devastations of addiction; broken marriages and families; the ravages of cancer and disease; the outrageous ambitions of science; consequences of monumental greed and corruption and unthinkable violence. How do I keep my head above water in this broken world? The rest of Christ’s words ([Jn. 16:33](#)) lift me above the fray and place my feet on solid ground: “But take heart; I have overcome the world.” Just as Edward Mote penned in his hymn about the Christian’s hope:

***When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale, my
anchor holds within the veil.
His oath, His covenant, His blood
support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.***

How do Jesus’ promises and shed blood stay my heart and mind? Peter’s first letter teaches us that the ground of our hope is Jesus. By God’s great mercy we have been “born again to a living hope” through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Not a “hope so” hope, but a hope filled with life and energy. We have also been born to an estate, that is “to an inheritance” which is salvation—eternal life! Exiles, leaving homes behind, have no inheritance but this is not the reality for children of the heavenly Father! This inheritance belongs to us for a certainty now, and we will take possession of it in the future. A salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter describes this inheritance as “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading”. As one commentator put it, “In substance incorruptible; in purity undefiled; in beauty unfading” [Alford]. And we are assured that this inheritance is “kept in heaven for you”. Calvin wrote:

“The inheritance is said to be reserved, or preserved, that we may know that it is beyond the reach of danger. For, were it not in God’s hand, it might be exposed to endless dangers. If it were in this world, how could we regard it as safe amidst so many changes? That he might then free us from every fear, he testifies that our salvation is placed in safety beyond the harms which Satan can do. But as the certainty of salvation can bring us but little comfort, except each one knows that it belongs to himself, Peter adds, ‘for you’.”

I Peter 1:3,4 is a passage to help us deal with the tragedies and sorrows of this world that would otherwise crush us. In these stormy times, it is also a word of hope for us to hold out to those who want to now how it is that we can identify with the pain of a fallen world and yet retain hope – “sorrowful yet always rejoicing.” Let us be bold to share our confidence in Jesus that others might draw near and “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”. May God increase our faith to stand even more securely on the solid Rock, Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Story of a Tiny Church with a HUGE ❤️

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD NEWS

from the December Update from Franklin Graham

Lifting Up the Name of Christ

Dear Friend,

As you read this, millions of Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts are on their way to children in more than a hundred countries. Everywhere we send them, we work with local churches and Christian partners who will hand them out in the Name of Jesus Christ.

That's true of everything we do at Samaritan's Purse, whether we are responding to hurricanes in the U.S. and Caribbean, treating the sick at mission hospitals around the world, or helping others who have wound up in the ditches of life. Wherever God leads us, we bear witness to Christ as we seek to build up the local church. I never cease to be amazed at what the Lord can do through churches who obey and trust Him. It takes thousands of churches in the U.S. and around the world working hand-in-hand with Samaritan's Purse to get shoebox gifts into the hands of so many children.

We're excited to hear the stories of how God is using churches like one in the village of Wild Peach, Texas, where a little country church packed a total of 8,091 shoebox gifts this year! For a church of only 30 people, this is a tremendous feat. It is even more incredible when you hear the rest of the story. Wild Peach was one of many places across Texas that was hit hard by Hurricane Harvey. Seven families at Grace Baptist Church had their homes severely damaged, including the pastor and his wife, Mark and Cherry Brumbelow. Amazingly, the thousands of shoeboxes they had already packed were not destroyed.

No one would have blamed Grace Baptist if they had decided to stop packing shoeboxes for the rest of this year to take time to recover from their devastating losses. But the Brumbelows and their small flock would not be deterred from reaching children around the world with the Gospel. Just weeks after the hurricane hit, Grace Baptist held a packing party that resulted in another 1,000 shoeboxes! "We know God has a special purpose for every shoebox, but we felt there was something different about these," said Mark.

We decided to send some of their shoebox gift on a special early shipment to 250 children from Barbuda whose homes were demolished when Hurricane Irma tore across their small Caribbean island. Their families are living on the nearby island of Antigua. They lost everything in the storm, so we didn't want these children to wait any longer to have something to celebrate. As Mark and Cherry went with us and placed shoebox gifts into the hands of eager children, they said they were thankful that the Lord put it on their hearts to participate in Operation Christmas Child despite their own loss. "Seeing this makes me want to do all I can while I can," said Mark. Cherry then added, "It's beyond words how excited I feel. I can't wait to get home to pack some more shoeboxes!"

© 2017 Samaritan's Purse. All rights reserved. Used with permission."





GRACE CHURCH NEWS



Adult Sunday School

This quarter the Adult Sunday School class is addressing the topic of knowing what we believe and why, so we can be better equipped as ambassadors of the good news of the gospel. Pastor Tom is using the book *Know Why You Believe*, by Scott Oliphant. Join in on **Sunday mornings at 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men of the church are invited to join together for Bible study, discussion, prayer and fellowship on **Saturday morning, January 20th, from 7-8:30 a.m.** at the home of Doug Rose in Stockbridge. The men are currently using the book *Unlimited Grace*, by Bryan Chapell. Breakfast will be served.



Cold Days, Warm Hearts

On these cold winter days, let's consider how we can bless others with the warmth of the love of Christ. Reach out to a neighbor or a member of our church family with a phone call, a note, an invitation to tea, or a gift of baked goods. Feeling lonely or isolated yourself? Take advantage of the opportunities for the warmth of Christian fellowship through our regularly scheduled church gatherings, or consider planning a fellowship event yourself.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:24-25



LOOKING AHEAD

Women's Fellowship

Enjoy encouraging fellowship as we look into the Scriptures and apply its truth to our lives at the monthly Women's Fellowship on **Saturday, February 3rd**. Meet at the church from **9:30-11:30 a.m.**, for a time of sharing and discussing our study of I Peter, prayer, and fellowship together.



"Live Coals" Prayer

All are encouraged to come together for our monthly time of corporate prayer from **5:00-6:00 p.m., Sunday, February 4th**, in the sanctuary. Join us as we acknowledge our dependence on Him in all things, and seek to know Him and His direction for our part in His kingdom work.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. - [1 John 5:14](#)





January 2018



S

M

T

W

T

F

S

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | 1 <i>New Year's Day</i> | 2 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 5:00 Live Coals Prayer | 8 7:00 Addictions Victorious | 9 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship | 15 7:00 Addictions Victorious | 16 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 7:00-8:30 am Men's Prayer Fellowship |
| 21 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship | 22 7:00 Addictions Victorious | 23 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship | 29 7:00 Addictions Victorious | 30 1:15 Ladies' Bible Class | 31 | | | |