

# Grace Notes



Grace Church Congregational  
1055 Williams Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

*Volume XVII, Issue 7*

*December 2018*

*Merry Christmas!*

*May your Christmas be blessed and centered on Christ!*





## From the Pastor's Desk

*But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. (Luke 10:33)*

It has been a delight for me to watch as many of you have taken the challenge to memorize one of the parables of Jesus and recite it in front of the congregation on Sundays. Charleen and I chose to work on the parable of the Good Samaritan together and anticipate having recited it by the time you read this newsletter.

I remember as a child a coworker of my dad's from General Electric spending many an evening at my home and sitting at our dinner table. He was a chemical engineer who was originally from India. His wife apparently could not adjust to the cultural differences and deserted him to return to India. He found in my family a home away from home. My parents even invited him to join us on our annual two-week vacation to North Carolina, this time for the Christmas holidays. (It was a sight to behold to see the eight of us mashed into a small station wagon for almost 2000 miles.) He even volunteered to cook a traditional Indian meal for us, replete with a very spicy pickled mango sauce.

Dr. U and my dad had many conversations about spiritual things, and I remember when my dad encouraged him to drive to Schenectady to talk with Dr. Mekeel, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, because my dad felt that Dr. Mekeel would be better able to respond to certain questions. Dr. U came home having committed his life to Christ. He later moved out of state, became a member of a good church and remarried. But he and my parents remained in contact with each other through the years, even corresponding with my mom after my dad died.

Last month in my newsletter article, I addressed the topic of reaching beyond our cultural barriers for the sake of bearing witness to the gospel. As part of that article I asked the question, "What do we do with the alien at our gates? Or for that matter those asking for asylum from Honduras or Syria?"

The whole question of border walls and refugees and immigration has taken front page as of late. I am more than ready to confess that I don't have all the answers. I do think it is important that we have clear and workable laws in place to facilitate those who would come from other countries and would like to make the US home. Why it is so difficult for our politicians to come to consensus is beyond me. It doesn't seem like it should be that complicated. But the argument is true, that America is a land of immigrants unless we were born Cherokee or Navaho. We all trace our ancestry back to another country and culture.

There is a difference between the State and the Church, the "City of Man" and the "City of God", as Augustine put it, and we as Christians hold citizenship in both. Yet when it comes to our most basic core values (and ethics) citizenship in God's Kingdom comes first. What does this mean for us as followers of Jesus?

For one thing, we need to pray, seriously, for those in positions of leadership, that their decisions would be motivated, not by political positioning, but by what is really right. We have some who are in positions of leadership, who, by their profession, are Christians and there are many who are not. We need to pray for them all.

But secondly, as I sought to point out last month, as those who follow Christ, we need to keep in mind that cultural self-protection is not our calling. Making disciples of all nations is. We may commit ourselves to sending missionaries to far corners of the earth to preach the gospel. We love to hear their stories and see their picture when they are home, but we can still confuse what is culturally familiar to us with the gospel. The two are not necessarily the same. Sometimes they are actually in conflict with each other.

I'm happy I'll see Dr. U in heaven. I'm even happier that my mom and dad modeled the good Samaritan for me.



Pastor Tom Bridgman

# Missions Corner

Excerpted from Tuvya and Ellen Zaretsky's December Update

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (Phil. 1:3). Around our Thanksgiving table, my family and I gave thanks to the Lord for you all. We appreciate your fellowship in bringing the gospel to our Jewish people. Whereas the Apostle Paul had a fatherly love for new disciples in Philippi, I thank God for your passion, faith and partnership as together we pursue the Lord's salvation plan for Jewish people. Thank you for your prayers and gifts of support on our behalf.

Please continue with us in fervent prayer for [one of the Jewish-Gentile couples I have been meeting with.] It took almost three months for us to find a date to meet for spiritual conversation, but it was worth the wait. S's objections to Jesus' gospel are falling away as we address each one. He is now seriously considering the social consequences that will likely erupt if and when he tells his Jewish family of his faith in Christ. The fear that the news could literally kill elderly parents with the shock is real. Join me, please, in praying that God will reveal the truth to S and bless him with courage to confess the Savior Jesus.

Also, please pray for A and T. She is Jewish, her fiancé is a Gentile, and both are young Christians. Our ministry is likely going to concentrate on helping her with both very traditional Jewish parents. They have already stated their vehement opposition to any kind of religious, let alone Christian, wedding ceremony. I often say, "Jewish-Gentile couple ministry is messy." In this case, that's an understatement! Pray for wisdom and the Lord's grace to navigate the cultural minefield in planning their wedding. They want a loving testimony to their mutual faith in Messiah Yeshua for their families.

I'm sending this out a few days before December, because tonight I'm getting ready for a huge week. Early in the morning, I will fly to New York city for meetings there with our Executive Leadership Team. On Wednesday night, I fly on to Europe where I'll train our Paris staff and a community of volunteers. They have translated my ministry workbook into French. So, everyone is ready! Hanukkah begins about the time I return home.

Currently, I'm working on content for the Jewish-Gentile couple outreach that will launch online in March. Before Thanksgiving...in a brief online test...over 250 people shared the post with friends saying, "Check this out!" That's a very good indicator to a small test, anticipating an excellent response to the full "Search for Yourself" outreach when we launch in March. Please pray for wisdom as I write that content.

Now our attention turns to Christmas. I'm grateful that Jesus is the reason for the season. Thank you for helping us make that message available so Jewish people get a chance to hear the Savior Messiah has come. Ellen joins me in praying God's shalom and blessings on you and your loved ones.

Happy Messiah's birthday,



Online: <http://www.j4j.co/tza>

P.S. Last month I was praying for a peaceful outcome in the face of plans that an anti-Semitic and anti-Israel group would hold a national conference on the campus at UCLA this month. According to a dear friend on the campus police force, the event was held without disturbance on the campus. UCLA Chancellor, Gene Bloch, wrote an excellent op-ed piece for the *Los Angeles Times*, which I thought worthy of including here if you are interested, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-block-ucla-students-for-justice-in-palestine-conference-20181112-story.html>



## Operation Christmas Child Thank You

2018

### Thank you

to all who contributed in various ways to our Drop-Off Location ministry for Operation Christmas Child this year. 12 volunteers contributed over 70 hours to staff the Drop-Off during National Collection Week.

**A total of 1,190 shoe boxes came through our doors** on their way to millions of children around the world.

**Each box represents a Gospel Opportunity** for a child and his or her family. Along with their shoebox gift, children also receive The Greatest Gift, a colorful presentation of the Gospel in their own language.

### BUT IT DOESN'T END WITH THE BOX!

After receiving shoebox gifts, many children are invited back to participate in a discipleship program, *The Greatest Journey*. Through this 12-lesson course, which includes Bible stories and Scripture memorization, they learn how to follow Christ in their daily lives as they share Him with friends and family. More than 14.9 million children have enrolled in this program since 2009.

So please pray for the distribution of these boxes, that they will arrive safely and go to the child God intends. Pray for those distributing the boxes that they might see much fruit as a result of this ministry. The following story shows some of the fruit of these simple gifts.

#### Dariya

When Dariya, 13, of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox gift in February, it interrupted her life with joy. "Because I attended the 12 lessons of The Greatest Journey, I am changed," Dariya said. "I developed more of a relationship with God." Dariya began keeping a prayer journal. "I write in my prayer book every day—sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening," she said. Dariya explained that she writes her prayers instead of saying them so she can remember what she has asked of God. Dariya is also copying Scripture into a notebook to help her remember it. She is currently working on the book of Proverbs. Dariya's grandmother, who is a Christian, said she sees "a bigger heart" in her granddaughter, and the shoebox gift "really strengthened her faith in God."



*What goes into the box is fun.*

*What comes out is eternal.*

# More Missions

## Update from George and Norine Carnevale

The trip [to Colombia Sept 15-Oct 7, 2018] started out a bit scary as George headed to Atlanta, Georgia, for his flight to Bogota. Hurricane Florence was in the area and due to reach land on the same weekend. But God gave his favor and Atlanta only had clouds with no rain and all flights passed through unaffected by the storm. Praise the Lord for His watchful care!

His three weeks in Bogota were fantastic. He worked with Dave and Marie DelMedico, former staff with Wycliffe Associates, and good friend so ours. It was a great time to work together again. George was able to do 35 odd jobs throughout the Deaf school, from laying floor tile to painting walls to pouring concrete. No fancy concrete mixers available in Bogota, just a willing man with two strong arms and a sturdy back!

One of the highlights was having the opportunity to share his testimony with the students. They were intrigued with the concept of ice fishing since none had ever seen a frozen pond. George encouraged questions after he told his personal story, and the ice fishing got the most questions.

A second highlight was a banquet to celebrate 20 years of translation, and the fun part of this evening was all the translating that was occurring right there in the event itself. The speaker for the evening was deaf so he was using Spanish Sign Language. A Spanish speaker was translating for all those attending who were not deaf and who spoke Spanish. Another man was translating for George and the few English speaking attendees from the Spanish into spoken English for them. Another group was having the speech translated for them from the Spanish Sign Language into American Sign Language. What a fascinating evening that turned out to be!

Pray for the senior students as they complete their education and enter the work force as deaf adults.

Pray for the work of translating the Scriptures into sign language. There are over 400 unique sign languages in the world.

Pray for this school to continue strong as a Christian school for the deaf and as a witness to the community of God's love and grace.

*Thank you for your part in this trip! We were able to meet the maintenance needs for this strategic school and build the Kingdom of God on earth. Your prayers and gifts to this work were important and made a difference! We could not have been there without your help.*

*We thank God for you!*

*George and Norine*

HOME: 4951 Buffalo St  
Midlothian, TX 76065 Email:  
njc75236@gmail.com

FIELD: International Linguistics Center  
7500 W. Camp Wisdom Rd  
Dallas, TX 75236



It wasn't that long ago  
that He'd spoken these stars  
into being  
and this woman's life  
was just a thought in His mind.  
He'd smiled down on her birth  
and entered her name in His pages  
perhaps with an asterisk  
denoting plans too sacred to be spoken  
but pondered in His heart.

Now  
newborn,  
in wide-eyed wonder  
He gazes up at His creation.  
His hand that hurled the world  
holds tight a mother's finger.  
Holy light  
meant for a hillside highway  
spills across her face  
and she weeps  
silent wondering tears  
to know she holds the One  
who has so long  
held her.

(Author unknown)





# GRACE CHURCH NEWS



## New Adult Sunday School Class

A new adult Sunday School class for the winter quarter will begin on Sunday, December 9th. Pastor Tom will lead us as we look at God's covenant – "I will be your God, and you will be my people," using *Covenants: God's way with his people* by O. Palmer Robertson.



## A Night in Bethlehem

Hope Church in Lenox invites you to share in their recreation of the village of Bethlehem at the time of our Savior's birth. You will experience various Biblical period things to see, smell, taste, and hear. **Saturday, December 8th from 3:00-6:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 9th from 2:00-5:00 p.m.** There is no cost.



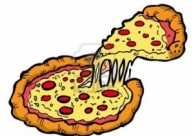
## Men's Prayer Fellowship

All men of the church are invited to join together for Bible study, discussion, prayer and fellowship on **Saturday morning, December 15th, from 7-8:30 a.m.** at the home of Doug Rose in Stockbridge. Breakfast will be served.



## Pizza and a Movie

The junior high and high school Sunday school class is invited to the Bridgmans' home for pizza and a movie. Come at **5:00 p.m., Sunday, December 16th** and feel free to bring a friend!



## A Service of Lessons and Carols

Please join us on Christmas Eve **Monday, December 24th at 6:00 p.m.** for a service of Scripture readings, carols, and special music. Invite a friend or neighbor for this special time as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.



## New Year's Eve Fellowship

Pastor Tom and Charleen invite you to come on over **Monday, December 31st, New Year's Eve** for a time of food and fellowship (with games!) Bring an appetizer-type dish to share, beverage, or dessert, and your favorite game. A sign-up sheet will be provided for attendance and food contributions. **Stop in anytime between 7 and midnight.**





# December 2018



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<b>2</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship <b>5:00 Live Coals Prayer</b>	<b>3</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>4</b>  1:00 Ladies' Bible Class	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>10</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>11</b>  1:00 Ladies' Bible Class	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 7:00-8:30 a.m. <b>Men's Prayer Fellowship</b>
<b>16</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship <b>5:00 Jr. &amp; Sr. High Pizza/ Movie night</b>	<b>17</b>  7:00 Addictions Victorious	<b>18</b>  1:00 Ladies' Bible Class	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>24</b>  <b>6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service</b>	<b>25</b> <i>Christmas Day</i> 	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	<b>31</b>  <i>New Year's Eve Fellowship</i>					