



GRACE NEWS & NOTES



May 1, 2020



Thank you to everyone who has continued to send in their tithes and offerings over the past month! Several people have or are starting to take advantage of the convenience of online giving. You have certainly “stepped up to the plate” to support our ministries here at Grace UMC. Following is a reflection of “Giving” that was printed in our newsletter several years ago.

“There are three kinds of giving: grudge giving, duty giving and thanksgiving.

Grudge giving says, ‘I have to’;

Duty giving says, ‘I ought to’;

Thanksgiving says, ‘I want to.’

The latter comes from a full heart and is an open gate into the love of God.”

“Give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

—Luke 6:38

Graduating?

We will be honoring our graduates in May (or June) and we need the name(s) of your graduate(s).

If a member of your family will graduate from middle school/junior high, senior high, junior college, college or university, or graduate school, please call the **church office at 327-8407 no later than Monday, May 11, 2020** and let us know. If there is no one in the office, please leave the following information on the church answering machine:

Name of Graduate

School they are graduating from

Degree if from a post-graduate school



**Grace UMC
Endowment Board
Scholarships—
\$1,000 each**

Required: Application, Essay, Proof of Acceptance or Transcript showing courses and grades from previous semesters, Proof of Enrollment as a full-time undergraduate student for the fall semester, Member of Nashville Grace UMC.

Applications are available in the church office or can be emailed to you. **Deadline: June 15, 2020**

Note: The next meeting of the Endowment Board is July 8, 2020.



Visit the Grace UMC
web site at
nashvillegrace.net and

click on “Online Giving” at the top of
the screen, **or** scan the Quick Response
(QR) Code with your cell phone.





Grace UMC Nashville, IL
Southside Christian Springfield, IL
St. Luke Union Bloomington, IL
Homer UMC Homer, IL
Trinity Lutheran Church Springfield, IL

Midwest Mission on March 30th, disbursed their third Food for the Poor International shipment leaving at 11:30 AM to go to Honduras. Food for the Poor will be disbursing these supplies with CEPUDO, which is a non-profit, that aims to serve the poorest community in Honduras. The supplies listed below will provide emergency relief, help promote a healthy lifestyle and offer hope to renew their spirits to the poorest in this community.

This shipment valued at \$98,344.78 and consisted of

- 20 rolls of fabric for sewing
- 4 treadle sewing machines
- 672 Midwest Mission Layette Kits
- 5,600 **Rice Meal bags** - Feeding 33,600 individuals in desperate need of a meal.
- 11,174 Cleaning Supplies (Empty buckets, work gloves, household cleaner, dish soap, Laundry soap and trash bags)
- 1,600 Hygiene Supplies (Bar soap, toothbrushes, and washcloths)
- 4,864 Medical Supplies (Wheelchairs, commodes, crutches, walkers, and exam gloves)
- 3 Hospital Beds with Mattresses
- 5,583 Hospital lines, blankets, and pillows

Thank you all again for your help in assembling these Rice Meals!!



BIRTHDAYS

| | | |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------|
| May | 6 | Jay Summers |
| | 8 | Matthew Sauerhage |
| | 10 | Phil May |
| | 17 | Ruth Fischer |
| | | Bridget Styninger |
| | 19 | John Hallock |
| | 20 | Gary Clark |
| | 24 | Nancy Barger |
| | 26 | Mike Reynolds |
| | 29 | Debra Gibbs |
| | | Cole Sauerhage |
| | 30 | Bruce Brown |

ANNIVERSARIES

| | | |
|------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| May | 4 | Jeff & Rose Ceglinski |
| | 10 | Gerry & Phyllis Dintelman |
| | | Mike & Wynnne Reynolds |
| | 26 | Dave & Ruth Fischer |

Congratulations everyone on your milestones! If your name was not included in our list, please inform the office so that we can update our records.

April Report

| Date | Attendance | Offering |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 04-05 | | \$4,139.69 |
| 04-05 | Online (Vanco) | \$ 149.44 |
| 04-12 | | \$5,456.00 |
| 04-12 | Online (Vanco) | \$ 698.57 |
| 04-19 | | \$1,260.00 |
| 04-19 | Online (Vanco) | \$1,538.02 |
| 04-26 | | \$ 690.00 |
| 04-26 | Online (Vanco) | \$ 599.32 |

Online Services were held during the entire month of April on Facebook and YouTube. Online Giving is a total amount given for each week.

From Me to You

First thing I want to say is this, if you haven't set up a place in your home to worship, please do. Fix yourself an altar, light a candle when you go there, pray and read scripture, and then meditate on what you have read while there at the altar. God will meet you at this place every day. By the time we move through this shelter-in-place you will have developed a valuable spiritual discipline.

I know that the way life has changed will have an effect on us from now on. People are saying this is the new normal, maybe or maybe not, that is yet to be determined.

It definitely has changed how we are doing worship and what it means to gather for worship. Let me remind you that church is not the destination. Let me explain what I mean by that.

Dr. Joy Moore, an associate Dean at Duke Divinity School, said in an address at the 2011 World Methodist Conference in South Africa, "The church is not the destination any more than the airplane and a successful flight are the ultimate destination on your next trip. The plane and a successful flight are indeed important, maybe essential, to reaching the destination, but they are not the end and purpose. The end is arriving at your home to be with your family or to successfully complete your business or enjoy your vacation. The end and purpose of the church is the way to salvation."

Our Wesleyan theology is very much rooted in what Dr. Moore states. The end and purpose of "the way of salvation" would be to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God, while serving our neighbor and seeking justice.

If Dr. Moore is correct, then how do we measure that or what is the test of any congregation? The worship, community life, and service ministries will determine if people are being taken to that destination.

Does our worship take us to a more profound connection with God? Does it help us to see the world through God's eyes? Do our ministries pull us into the fullness of Christ's compassion for a hurting world? Are we moved to greater compassion, generosity, humility, obedience, and prayer? Am I becoming a new creation in Christ because of belonging to the Body of Christ in this congregation? Does our church take our world to a better place that reflects the reign of God and the peace of Christ? What is the destination and purpose of our church, and are we moving in the right direction?

There are always lots of questions, but they are needed to keep us focused on the right things and to keep us moving in the right direction. Why? Going back to Dr. Moore's metaphor, if you have been in an airplane, you know there will be unexpected turbulence. In a congregation, undoubtedly the way forward will require tolerance for unexpected turbulence. "Are we there yet?" you're asking.

Also, traveling on a plane requires I get along with people I might otherwise not choose to sit beside. I may be assigned comfortable or uncomfortable seats. It may seem an inconvenience, but this is all part of seeking the destination. Without the plane and the flight experience I would never get to my destination.

Think about this, without belonging to a congregation and everything that involves—such as worship, community, service, prayer, generosity, and witness—the destination of growing in the grace of Christ remains a far away desire, or a philosophical abstraction.

That's not a new normal, that's how it always has been and always will be!

*Keep Safe and
Keep Being Faithful!*

Pastor Bill

'Jesus wept': Finding God's Comfort When Times are Bad



Sometimes, watching or reading the news can be depressing. We attempt to follow the biblical mandate to find and think about whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). The stories dominating the media, however, often make us sad, frustrated, or angry.

Additionally, we have personal struggles at home and work, with finances, relationships, illness, and so much more.

We turn to our faith for answers, but answers don't often come easily. There are mostly questions. What are people of faith to do in the midst of overwhelming tragedy and strife?

Jesus wept

The shortest verse in the Bible, in the King James Version at least, is just two words, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Though only 10 characters, too short even to tweet, that verse has tremendous significance, especially when we are struggling to find hope.

Jesus weeps in the midst of comforting his friends Mary and Martha who are grieving the death of their brother Lazarus. Yes, that Lazarus. The one famous for being raised by Jesus. Jesus is out of town when he hears of Lazarus' illness. Rather than adjusting his plans to go visit this friend whom he loves (John 11:3), Jesus instead decides to stay where he is for a couple of days. He tells the disciples Lazarus' illness will somehow serve the glory of God, and that God's Son will be glorified through it (John 11:4).

By the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead four days. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, are understandably miffed at the lack of urgency Jesus showed. In their own way, each of them expresses their frustration with him. They are convinced their brother would not have died if Jesus had come when he was first summoned (John 11:21, 32).

There, watching the grief of this family and community, Jesus begins to cry. There is debate as to why, John doesn't tell us, but I am convinced it is out of empathy for the pain of those he loves. In that moment, Jesus was feeling Mary and Martha's grief, their sense of hopelessness, their pain and loss. So he cries.

Comfort

There is comfort in knowing we don't worship a stoic God. The God we know in Christ Jesus feels our pain and knows our loss. He weeps with us.

We also worship a God who can take our frustration. Mary and Martha vent, and so can we. As it is in any healthy relationship, we need to be open and honest with those we love, even when we are angry with them. If anyone can take it, certainly Jesus can.

It is also a comforting reminder that even while we are going through our pain, and Jesus feels far from us, it is not because he doesn't love us. He loved Lazarus, the Bible tells us, even while not taking his illness from him.

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New life

Lazarus' story does not end with his death. At his tomb, Jesus calls Lazarus' name and the crowds watch in disbelief as Lazarus emerges...alive. While Mary and Martha thought Jesus had come too late to help, we learn there is never a "too late" with God.



We may believe our situation is hopeless. We may not see a solution. We may not have a clue how to get out of the mess in which we find ourselves. In Jesus, though, there is always hope. There is always the possibility of new life, not just some day in the great by-and-by, but here in this life. This is the whole point of Jesus' resurrection – new life today, and a new life to come.

Questions

When I finish reading the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, I still have questions. Why did Lazarus have to go through all of this? Why did Jesus come too late to keep him from dying? Why did Mary and Martha have to experience grief?

In the tragedies I experience and read about, I am left with questions also. Why do some feel so hopeless they take their own lives? Why do people of faith receive devastating diagnoses? Why isn't a doctor and hospital doing so much good, supernaturally protected from illness? Why are families rattled by unemployment and lives lost in natural disasters? Why do we suffer?

While we may not receive all the answers we want, we know Jesus weeps with us.

Questions for discussion and contemplation:

Have you known anyone whose life changed due to illness, tragedy, struggles? What was your response?
When have you felt as though Jesus was distant?
When have you wondered why God allowed something to happen, or didn't stop something from occurring?
If you struggle with venting your frustration toward God, why is that? If not, why not?
How does it help to know there is someone weeping with you when you are suffering?
Have you ever cried for someone you did not know? Is that a helpful response?
Can you picture God as having emotions? Does God cry? Laugh? Become angry?
Why does God allow us to suffer, grieve, and struggle?
When you are in a place of desperation, what do you do?
Has God brought you peace and newness when you thought it was too late?
How does the hope you have in Christ Jesus keep you going?

Resources for further reading:

When Grief Breaks Your Heart by James W. Moore. This book explores what faith says about the grief experience and how faith helps mend a broken heart.

The Gift of Encouragement: Restoring Heart to Those Who Have Lost It by Marjorie J. Thompson. The Gift of Encouragement offers practical help to persons serving those who need comfort.

When the One You Love Is Gone by Rebekah L. Miles. When the One You Love Is Gone encourages us to use our scars, messes, and the heartache to give new life to ourselves, and others.

Hope Beyond Your Tears: Experiencing Christ's Healing Love by Trevor Hudson. Hudson offers an excellent resource for exploring the importance of Christ's resurrection for your life.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

We're on the Web
Nashvillegrace.net

Dated Material Do Not Delay