

# GRACE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2020

## A Letter to the Grace Family

Dear Grace family:

The anonymous mystery giver of the \$100,000 debt reduction challenge gift was in reality a gift from the estate of Nancy Kincaid.

Nancy loved the Lord, but she also loved Grace Church. She loved her Grace family, Pastor Dan and Jill Powell, and Pastor Beverly. She loved to ring the handbells, to usher, to serve as a teller and occasionally bake cakes for various Grace dinners. She loved the women of Grace who stayed with her as her illness progressed.

A few weeks after coming to Grace from another church where she had worshipped for 50 years, Nancy remarked that she didn't know what church was before coming to Grace. If Nancy were still here with us, other than being with us only in spirit, she would have gladly offered this gift to help pay off our debt.

Thanks to all who helped Nancy in this debt reduction challenge. We still have a way to go, but we made a big dent in it.

Your brother in Christ,  
Jim Kincaid



## A Response from the Congregation

Thank you so very much for presenting us with this challenge. Your gift, coupled with the incredible generosity of many members of this congregation, generated \$233,158.29 toward the elimination of our Ministry Expansion indebtedness. In conjunction with other gifts received in January, our balance has dropped from \$577,985.79 at the end of November to \$337,299.43 as of the writing of this response.

Nancy's love for this church and for the Grace family was certainly no secret to those of us who knew her. We know she would reflect our words of appreciation heavenward, so with grateful hearts for this gift and for her years of service within our church, we simply say "To God be the Glory."

## Pastor's Reflection

Part of the miracle of the Bible is the wonderful way in which God inspired the writers to weave the stories of faith together. One such example comes in the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Mark.

After several teachings on such subjects as divorce, the faith of the children and lack of it in one rich man, Jesus is approached by two of His disciples: James and John. In other gospels, these boys send their Mom, but here in Mark's version they themselves are the ones to come. Jesus asks them a simple question: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:36).

Despite having just heard another teaching about the pending suffering of Jesus as He works His way toward the cross, these disciples arrogantly campaign for top level cabinet positions in the new kingdom they expect Jesus to create. He is, after all, the Messiah and they, after all, have been part of His inner circle from the beginning. They were among the original disciples called.

"You don't know what you are asking," is the response of Jesus (Mark 10:38). They heard the teaching but couldn't visualize the reality.

Immediately following this story, Jesus is approached by yet another man. We know him as blind Bartimaeus. He was a beggar, forced into that role because his physical condition left him with no alternative. Jesus posed the same question to this man that He had previously presented to James and John: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). The blind man's response was classic: "I want to see" (Mark 10:51).

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## Pastor's Reflection (cont.)

Fascinating, isn't it? James and John had lived with, walked with, and ministered with Jesus for almost three years. Despite their advantages of proximity and physical sight, they could only see what they wanted to see. Bartimaeus, who was in the presence of Jesus only briefly nonetheless knew that the answer to his sightlessness was standing before him. He had only to ask. And he did. "I want to see." And then he could.

Sometimes we each can only see what we want to see when it comes to matters of our faith. We fix our vision on a particular outcome and ask Jesus to fulfill that vision. "Here's what we think it should look like!" we say. "Now make it happen, Jesus! Do it our way." And then we grow discouraged and disheartened when it becomes clear that God has something entirely different in mind.

How much better it would be if, instead, our response more closely mirrored the blind man's request: "Lord, I want to see." I want to see what You want me to see. I don't want to see my agenda, my will, my plans implemented. I want to see what You have in store for me.

I encourage you to pray those words every day. As you sit down for your daily devotions, ask Jesus to let you see His message for your life. As you prepare to work your way through your prayer list, ask the Father to show You how He wants you to pray. As you leave your house to go about your day, ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes that see the needs of the people you will meet.

And pray it for our church, too. As we pray about the vision that God has for this wonderful congregation in our next season of ministry, pray that each of us might see His plan clearly. –Pastor Thomas M. Brodbeck

## Eyes to See

What a joy it is for me to be your pastor and to serve our Lord together!

I am grateful for the warm blessings and welcome Christen and I have received upon our coming to you. Thank you for your hospitality, generosity and God's love you have shown as we make the transition into a new season of life and ministry together. I am truly looking forward to what the Lord has in store.

As we move forward into what God has for us in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead, I would like to share a few words of vision with you--words that I pray invoke both challenge and encouragement.

First, vision can be defined in different ways, but for the purpose of this article, vision will be defined as: "the ability of painting on a canvas of what will be." A number of years ago, I served as the chaplain at Cypress Christian School in Galloway, Ohio. During a spiritual life retreat, I was left with this take away: vision is all about allowing the Holy Spirit of God to write upon one's heart in such a way that the Divine pen of God accomplishes His purpose in and through our lives.

During that particular week, I asked the art teacher to organize a few of her students to paint a portrait of our spiritual experience. From the beginning to the end of our worship, students were painting a picture of what the Lord brought to mind during the singing, the teaching/preaching and the small group time. They started to paint on a blank canvas and ended up with a beautiful painting, which I still have to this day. This experience had a profound impact on my life when it comes to vision.

As we begin a new journey of faith together, I want you to know that God has richly blessed Grace wonderfully and bountifully. During this season of transition, I seek to learn of our wonderful past, not only of what God has done in the life of our church, but also what God has done in our community. It has been a blessing for me to meet several of you in your homes and businesses, learning about you and your families, about our church, and about the community of Springfield. I give thanks and praise to the Lord for what he has done through the many years of ministry at Grace. But what is behind us is only the beginning!

While we celebrate together our rich heritage, let us also embrace what the Lord could do through us in the days ahead. God is up to something new--something that our human level of understanding is not capable of contemplating. The prophet Isaiah writes: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19 NIV). God has worked through both the wonderful and bountiful, the good and the bad. But Isaiah calls us not to dwell too long on either.

Isaiah is giving the same encouragement that I am giving you. As we move forward together in a new season of life and ministry, may we embrace both what God has done in the life of our church in the past, while at the same time, look ahead with eager expectation at what the Lord wants to do in the future. Everyday, as we live in our Baptismal Promises, God is creating faith in us to embrace the "new thing" that He is doing. When you rise in the morning, God is waiting to reveal himself to you in his Holy Word. As you partake of the Lord's Supper, God gives to you the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, so that you may be strengthened in faith with service to your neighbor. God is constantly giving himself to you, pouring out his Holy Spirit upon you to embrace the new that He is doing. So, let us allow the Holy Spirit to paint on the canvas of our hearts what is good and pleasing to Him that, following him in obedient joy, we might, in all things, declare the greatness of his name.

## Eyes to See (cont.)

Now, with the encouragement comes the challenge. A church that lives on mission to be and to make disciples of Jesus Christ not only embraces the "new thing" that God is doing, they, most importantly, are people of prayer. Every person in the church is absolutely important. Every person plays a crucial role in taking our church to the people in our community, nation, and world. Only you can take the love of Jesus and pray for those at your workplace. Only you can pray with a struggling child in your school. Only you can pray with a lonely, elderly person and remind them that they are not alone.

Will you pray and ask the Lord to guide and lead you to pray for our church and those who the Lord will send to our church? Will you ask the Holy Spirit to show you what part he is calling you to play in making disciples in this faith community? Will you pray that God would give us eyes to see what He is doing and how we might partner with the power and person of the Holy Spirit in that work?

How is God leading you to serve? Are you willing to step outside your comfort zone to lead a ministry that has yet to be started? Our call and mission is not to make members. Our call and mission is to make disciples. And Prayer fuels that mission. Jesus left the ninety-nine in search of the one. Who is your one--that one person who does not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you invite them to church so that they can hear the truth of who God is and what God has done for them? Will you live out the Gospel to them in the workplace, so that they see a picture of what a life of forgiveness looks like?

As your pastor, my prayer is that we would celebrate what God has done through our church in the past, while at the same time, embrace what He will do in the future. I pray that as God calls you to something new, you would embrace it with thanksgiving, knowing that the One who called you is faithful.

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will.

Your pastor, fellow servant, and friend, Pastor Brian S. McGee

## Which Pastor Is It?

Every pastoral team needs to figure out how to best build on each other's strengths and areas of passion. For our pastors, that work began shortly after Grace extended a call to Pastor McGee back in September. Over time those lines of demarcation will become clearer, particularly as Pastor McGee becomes more and more familiar with our congregation's various ministries and style of leadership.

But for now, your pastors want to communicate an important shared commitment they have in the area of pastoral care. Both pastors have a firm desire to know each member of the congregation so that everyone in our church feels totally free to speak with either pastor on any subject.

One of the key ways Grace members will experience this is in the area of hospital visitations. Both pastors will make hospital calls. This will include praying with you prior to your scheduled surgeries (as you may request). In a normal week, Pastor Brodbeck will cover Monday, Wednesday and Friday while Pastor McGee will make those visits on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. They will share responsibility on Sundays, and will, of course, will cover for each other during vacations and other times one of them may be away from the office. You don't need to remember that breakdown. They have a good system in place to keep each other apprised of what is happening.

## The Journey: Our Lenten Theme

Believe it or not, the season of Lent begins in just a few weeks! Ash Wednesday is February 26, kicking off seven weeks of spiritual preparation for our Easter Sunday celebration on April 12.

Our Lenten theme this year is "The Journey." Luke 9:51 tells us that "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." That journey would take Him a number of places before eventually leading Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, Golgotha and the empty tomb. Thus inspired we will focus on our own spiritual journey which must also eventually bring us to those same three places.

We will worship at noon and 7 p.m. on Ash Wednesday. Then, beginning the following week on Thursday, March 5 through April 2, we will worship each Thursday evening at 7 p.m. During Holy Week we will again host two worship services (noon and 7 p.m.) on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Service times on Palm Sunday (April 5) and Easter Sunday (April 12) will remain the same as our normal Sunday worship schedule (8 and 10:45 a.m.)

Our devotional guide this Lent will be something a bit different. Instead of providing a document with a pre-written meditation, we will publish a list of Scripture passages that fit our Lenten theme and preaching schedule. Everyone in the congregation is encouraged to read the passage and then join in a community conversation about the text. We will use all of our social media venues – Facebook, Twitter, the Grace app and others – to talk about how that passage helps us in our own spiritual journey. We are excited about this, and look forward to your participation.

We are also looking for someone with woodworking skills to build a cross to be used in the Good Friday services. Many of you are aware of our longtime Grace tradition of carrying a nail from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday. This year, instead of simply returning the nail in an offering plate, we will offer you the opportunity hammer that nail into the cross as a way of acknowledging that Jesus died for your sins too. See Pastor Brodbeck for more details if you can take on this project.



the art of   
**marriage**®  
getting to the heart of God's design

### Adult Sunday School

Two new Sunday School classes will be offered beginning February 16. Each will run for six weeks, leading up to the March 29 congregational meeting.

The first is a video series entitled "The Art of Marriage: Getting to the Heart of God's Design." This small-group Bible study helps participants blend their personalities and their life's circumstances to create a divinely-inspired work-of-art marriage. Every marriage is unique, expressed by the colorful personalities of each spouse and textured by the circumstances at play in their lives. Blending these to make marriage work is a divinely inspired art form challenging to master, but definitely worth the effort. It is a great course of those considering marriage too.

The second class will be a study of the various names for God, with a focus on those that lead us into an awareness of God's redemptive plan fulfilled in the Easter event. Throughout the Scriptures, God's people used different names to describe their unique experiences with Him. Pastor McGee will lead this study.

Please make Sunday School a part of your Sunday morning experience!

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