

Grace Messenger

July 2020

Pastor Brodbeck's Reflection

Happy birthday America! During this month of July we celebrate our country's 244th birthday. We live in a nation that has been "conceived in liberty." That phrase, coined by Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg address captures the heart of what we celebrate as Americans. We are free. During these days we will proudly proclaim that freedom in many ways, one of which will be the recitation of these words:

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Together with all Americans we offer thanks to God for this country and for the men and women, past and present, who have fought to make this country free. We at Grace offer a special thank you to those from within our congregation who have served and who continue to do so. As we celebrate our country this month, we also celebrate you.

As Christians we enjoy a double freedom. We not only live in a nation that is free, we know the truth of the freedom that is ours in Christ Jesus. Because of our saving relationship with Jesus, we have been set free from bondage to sin, free to live the life for which we were created.

In my younger days, I was taught two additional pledges to recite along with the one cited above. These were meant to remind of my double blessing of freedom. Perhaps you learned them too. Over the years I've heard a couple of different versions, but here is the way I learned them:

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag, and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands; one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again with life and liberty to all who believe.

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Its words will I hide in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Freedom is a great gift, whether freedom from foreign oppression or the ravages of sin. Famed author William Faulkner once said, "We are not free because we claim freedom, but because we practice it." That is true for each half of our double blessing.

This month be thankful for your freedoms – all of them. Enjoy fireworks (if you can find them) and cookouts. Enjoy your time off and your time with friends and family. Soldiers died so you could do that.

But please take a moment to express thanksgiving for the freedom you have been given because of your faith in Jesus. Remember, He died so you could do that, too.

Countdown to Zero

In 2012, the Grace congregation took the initial steps to expand its ministry both within and beyond the congregation. It was clear that the church needed additional educational space to house its growing youth and children's ministries, as well as provide other meeting spaces for adult education and other church ministries. It was also clear that our original building footprint severely limited our ability to have large church gatherings, such as church dinners and recreational space. We also were limited in our ability to engage the surrounding community and the various outreach ministries we supported in meaningful ways.

Hence we began the Ministry Expansion Program (MEP). The result? In April 2014 we officially opened the youth wing and in October 2014 we moved into the community center. Both additions have been a major blessing to our congregation and community. Because of these spaces, we have had an impact in area outreach ministries that exceeds \$250,000 in savings and funds generated. We have hosted four large gatherings of the Southwest Ohio Mission District. Our youth groups can energetically meet. And remember the retirement celebrations for Pastor Powell and Pastor DeBord? Neither would have been possible before the MEP.

Now, only six years after opening the doors on these spaces, we are on the precipice of paying off the indebtedness for this expansion. June marks the end of our second capital campaign. What began as a \$2.4 million commitment will soon see a zero balance. As of June 1, the remaining debt was \$275,500.40, a remarkable achievement in such a short amount of time.

The Congregation Council is committed to paying this debt off in full by the end of 2020 and is working on a strategy to make that happen. A zero balance will immediately have a \$30,000 impact on our annual budget. Each member of the Grace family is encouraged to assist in that goal. Please keep giving. And if you have never given, please start.

RETURN: Wave #2 Starts July 12

The second wave of our re-entry to Grace plan launches on Sunday, July 12 with an Outreach Break between the two Sunday morning worship services. Jeff Pinkleton, executive director of the Gathering, will be present at 9:15 to introduce his ministry to those in attendance. Jeff is an energetic and engaging speaker who has a deep passion for seeing people – especially men – grow deeper in their discipleship. His presentation will be held in the community center.

Then in the days that follow, the church will be opened for small group gathers of 50 people or less. This would include guild meetings, ministry team meetings, Bible studies, and such activities as baby showers and graduation parties. The nursery will once again be available during worship services. We will also begin to invite outside groups back into the building as long as they agree to abide by the social distancing guidelines we have in place at that time. Some groups will need to move from their normal meeting spaces into larger areas (like the fellowship hall). And we plan to continue to “Zoom” in those who may prefer to attend from their own homes.

This second wave return will be largely dependent on what our community is experiencing with regards to COVID-19 at that time. We will reserve the right to change course if it becomes necessary.

ONLINE WORSHIP CONTINUES

Grace had been planning to develop an online campus for several weeks prior to the onsite of COVID-19. The pandemic caused us to speed up the implementation of plans, that were already in the works. Thus, for the long term **future**, sharing our 10:45 a.m. worship experience in an online format will continue.

YOU SHOULD NOT COME IF ...

...You are feeling ill, even just a little bit.

...You have been exposed to someone with COVID-19

...You are at all apprehensive about returning.

At Grace, we extend grace in abundance to anyone who is not yet ready to return. You will be loved regardless!

WHAT CHANGES SHOULD I EXPECT?

- Face masks are not required, but are highly recommended. Think “others first” please.
- Only the front doors will be unlocked, and your access will be limited to the narthex, restrooms and sanctuary.
- Upon arriving, you should go immediately into the sanctuary and be seated. After the service, when dismissed, you should leave the building immediately as well.
- No children’s activity bags but nursery service returns July 12.
- There will be no bulletins or other handouts. Hymnals and all other items have been removed from the pews. The worship resource will continue to be posted online.
- Every other row of seating will be blocked off to ensure 6’ social distancing standards. Seats will be wiped down after each service.
- We will “Share the Peace” without moving around. A smile and wave will suffice.
- We will not pass the offering plates or prayer box. Prayer request should be emailed prior to the service. Offering plates will be available during Holy Communion.
- Doors will be propped open to eliminate the need for touching.

Wave #3—Return to full ministry (mid-late August)

December 5 Charity Auction

This is just a reminder that we are continuing with our plan to have the Charity Auction on December 5.

If you were planning to make something to donate but you stopped because you hadn’t heard that we are still having it, please move forward with your item(s). Make a note to yourself to get your items ready.

After all that we have experienced since mid-March, it is good to look forward to an exhilarating morning. We will be together, in our church, doing good for others. Because, that’s what we do! - Janet Rice

Ministry Area Highlight: The Grace Culture Crew

We are a church that understands the importance of making disciples. More specifically, we understand the importance of making disciples who also make disciples. That is, we are committed to becoming a community that consistently and intentionally reproduces followers of Jesus Christ, and that pattern continues from generation to generation.

At Grace, our discipleship efforts are steered by a team known as the "Culture Crew." That name was born out of the team's purpose; namely, to foster a "culture of discipleship" within our church. They have been asked to do two primary tasks.

First, the Culture Crew is to challenge everything we do at Grace with this question: "How does that make disciples?" Our commitment, as a church, is to remain laser-focused on the Great Commission. The question is important because it is easy for a church to drift away from its central mission. Doing good things isn't necessarily doing the right things.

Second, they are to help the pastors create opportunities for people to grow in their faith and in their ability to raise up other disciples. In so doing, the Culture Crew encourages people to start small group Bible studies (Life to Life groups) and other discipling conversations. These relational experiences are centered around an open Bible and mutual sharing and accountability. Our dream is to have the entire congregation engaged in such an experience, and to see those groups expand well beyond our local church.

To that end, while we wait for the resumption of onsite adult Sunday School, the Culture Crew will be offering weekly Life to Life group meetings in between the two morning worship services starting July 19. Your group might meet in the community center, on one of the church patios, or later during the week in your own home. More details will be coming in early July.

In addition to the Grace pastors, the Culture Crew is composed of these members: Lori Fain, Amy Fraker, Darla Kalifoot, Jim Kreckman, Sam Poston, Dean Settles, Beth Szekacs, and Sheryl Wineberg. Talk to any one of them if you would like to know more about the work of discipleship in our church.

July Outreach Corner

Outreach Break, featuring The Gathering (of the Miami Valley) and return to Sunday school will be on Sunday July 12th at 9:15am in the Community Center. Jeff Pinkleton of The Gathering of the Miami Valley will speak with our congregation about this men's ministry in Springfield. Plan to join us, not only to hear more about this awesome men's ministry, but to learn how you can get involved and/or support the cause.

We continue to donate food to the HOPE ministry to help feed our community children and families during this challenging time. Bring donations of bread, peanut butter, bagged snacks, fruit, and Ziploc bags. Please place items in the donation bin in the front entrance.

Looking for another way to help feed those in need here in Springfield? The Pack Shack is a National organization that helps feed local neighborhoods. They supply the food and instructions, we supply the space, people and just 25 cents per meal and can choose where the meals go. Watch for more information to come about an opportunity for Grace to participate in this ministry on Saturday August 15th. We will need donations for food and people to put the meals together. Find out more at <https://thepackshack.org>.

The Grace Garden is in full bloom and production is high. Please get your produce on Sunday mornings before the 10:45 service begins. Tell your friends and neighbors too, because there is more than enough to go around. Also, please reach out to Terry Fredrich or Jerry Angst if you have any interest in helping out. They always need help weeding and caring for the garden.

Financial Stewardship

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. - 2 Cor.4:18

This verse states how we humans place a strong emphasis on the importance of what we see around us. But, in the teachings of Jesus, we are to always strive for the spiritual life after we leave this world. Following the path of God will never be an easy thing for us to do.

In the past few months, I have heard the words pandemic and Covid-19 virus in every paragraph and conversation in which I have taken part. Overnight, our way of life has changed dramatically because we do not know and understand the cause of this virus. We cannot hug our kids or see our kids because they live far away. We are viewed as a threat because people are afraid of catching the virus from you or you will catch the virus from other people. We, as human beings, were never meant to live this way. Therefore, what do we do?

I faced my mortality years ago when I was diagnosed with cancer for the 2nd time in a year. I was faced with the possibility that I would not live to see my child grow up. Here I am today, a testimony to God having giving me the strength and courage to go through the treatments needed to get better. He wasn't done with me yet. Since then, I have lived every day as if it was my last and have never taken all the blessings God has given me for granted...my family. They cannot be replaced. I have cherished them above all the "things" I have acquired in my life. Following God is first and foremost in my life, therefore, I am prepared to move forward without fear, because He is with me always.—Cathy Zernechel

Plugged In

I have great joy in sharing with you that our new Plugged In young adult ministry is going to start – finally. After a couple of setbacks and something like COVID-19 rearing its ugly head, we're ready for take-off. Therefore, to start, we're going to meet on zoom to help lay a foundation of building healthy relationships together. To assist in doing this, we'll be using Andy Stanley's 8-part study entitled, "Community - Starting Well." I'm pumped and I hope that you are too.

So, who is Plugged In for? Well, I'm glad you asked. Plugged In is for all young adults, ages 18-45. I know that's a broad range of ages, but I'll let you define 'young adult.' The mission of Plugged In is: "connecting people to a life-saving relationship with God and a life-giving relationship with others."

My prayer for this ministry is for meaningful and transformational relationships to be formed among us. Connecting with our Creator and Redeemer, we live in a restored relationship with God through Jesus. This experience is life-saving. It saves us from sin, death, and the devil and gives us eternal life in Jesus' name. But this discipling relationship we have with God is most meaningful when we share it in communal life together. I also pray that this would be a safe place where we can invite our unchurched/dechurched friends to come and be fully accepted, loved and embraced - a place where the love of Jesus surrounds them and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit calls and empowers them for righteous living.

I invite you to come to our first gathering on Sunday, July 19 at 4 pm. The zoom link will be posted on the Grace website. In addition, email invites will be going out the last week of June, so if you'd like to be included on that email list and your email is not in our Servant Keeper database, please send your email address to: brian.mcgee@grace-nalc.org.

I'm excited about what the Lord will do in us and through us in the days ahead!

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



PLUGGED IN

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO A **LIFE SAVING** RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS AND A **LIFE GIVING** RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

A NEW YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRY BEGINNING
JULY 19 AT 4PM
ON ZOOM

CURRENT RESIDENT OR

Non-Profit
Organization
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