

# GraceNotes

## From the Desk of Pastor Jim ...

I am very excited about our journey as a church through “*The Story*” of God. The reason that I am so excited is that too many Christians and too many Christian churches today concentrate so heavily on teaching only the last half of God’s Story. In order to fully understand God’s Story, we need to know and understand the whole Story, not just a part of it. I am by no standard a great Bible scholar, but I enjoy teaching and discovering ways to connect the Old and New Testaments in order to show people that God’s Word is one complete work. A complete revelation of His Story and His redemptive work to build a relationship with His most treasured creation, man.

My prayer is that you will gain a greater understanding and appreciation for God’s Word, that you will understand God’s incredible love for you, and that through studying God’s Word you will grow in love, grace, and your relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

As we journey through “The Story” together it is important to remember that there are two stories occurring throughout the scriptures. Randy Frazee, the author of “*The Story*”, describes these two stories as the “upper” and “lower” stories. The “upper” story is God’s Story. It is God’s grand design and plan for His creation. It is the story of His redemptive work to rebuild a relationship with man once again. The “lower” story is the story of the here and now, the experiences and circumstances of our daily lives and the lives of the Biblical characters who

came before us. The amazing thing about God’s plan to me is that God uses imperfect and fallen people in the “lower” story to accomplish His “upper” story plans. My prayer is that we will all be able to connect our “lower” story with God’s “upper” story and experience the blessings and freedom of life with God through Jesus Christ.

We are a part of God’s Story. God is constantly reaching out to us to draw us into His “upper” Story. I would love to hear about your story. How your story has connected with God’s Story. If you would be willing to share your story with the church, I invite you to contact me and let me know. I would love for you to share your story during worship as a way to encourage others on their journey and in their story.

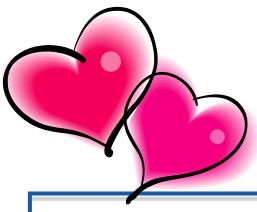
Blessings

Pastor Jim

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# MISSIONS ...

We ended 2011 with a successful collection of shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Grace Memorial donated 101 shoe boxes and the total collected at our church's collection center was 1,903. We also donated \$300 to the Union Rescue Mission to help with the daily meals they were serving.

At our first meeting for 2012 the committee discussed ways to give additional support to the Union Rescue Mission. January 15-29 we will be collecting large #10 cans of vegetables (*peas, carrots, corn, green beans, small potatoes, diced tomatoes and tomato sauce*) as well as # 10 cans of fruit (*peaches, pears & fruit cocktail*). An area will be available in the back of the sanctuary to place your donations. Also needed are dried pinto, navy or lima beans, large bags of spaghetti and large containers of peanut butter. Monetary donations can also be made to the Union Rescue Mission with the money being used to update their kitchen.

Don Diehl and Ray Delawder have agreed to co-chair the Shoes for Orphan Souls project this year. While still in the planning stage, we will kick the program off late in July 2012 with a concert followed with collection of new shoes and socks all during August. We all can be alert to shoe sales here and as we shop out of the area. Payless Shoes in the Country Club Mall has agreed to help with their "buy-one-get one for half price" special. Stay "tuned" as we get the project in full swing.

The committee approved a \$200 donation to Corey and Christine Friend who have a campus ministry for our Lord at West Virginia University. Both are graduates of WVU. Recently, they have extended their ministry to Garrett College where Corey attended before transferring to WVU.

A big "thank you" to Karla Sparber for picking up the committee secretary job.

The Missions Committee meets the first Tuesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. and new members are always welcome.

—Jean Marchione



## Ladies Bible Study ...

Beginning a new year also means we will be starting a new Bible Study. The book selected is *"Trials—Don't Resent Them as Intruders"*.

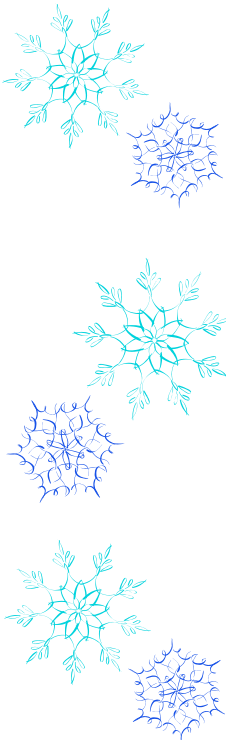
Everywhere we turn we find hurting people whose lives are filled with disappointment, despair and doubt. Life is full of trials. Some have more than others.

Most of us have changed as a result of the trials God has allowed in our lives. This study will answer the following questions:

- Why does God allow trials?
- How can we handle trials?
- What can we learn from trials?
- How can we have joy in the midst of trials?

As the answers to these questions are found, we will learn to face our trials head on and not run from them, rather, we will learn from them. From these lessons we will have a new understanding as to why God allows trials and to learn to have joy in the midst of our trials.

Praying that your New Year will be blessed, happy and productive. Keep in mind that Christ is our source of strength and that we can do anything with His help and guidance. —Rita Mower



# Expressions of God's Love

Valentine's Day is a day we set aside to focus on and express our love for others. It is a time when love seems to fill the air as we look for ways to express this love and appreciation to those we are closest to. For some, that may include purchasing candy, flowers, or sending heart-warming greeting cards to that special someone in our lives. No matter what the means of expression may be, this special occasion is most certainly a time when our love is demonstrated in countless ways to those who are dear to us. As I was thinking on this subject of love, the thought that entered my mind was all of the ways in which God expresses His love for us, not just on Valentines' Day but each and everyday of our lives. If we would stop and think about all the ways in which God does express this love, a sense of astonishment and thanksgiving should flood our hearts and inspire us to love Him and others as we are instructed to do in His word.

Love is the central message of the Bible and is something that God extends to each and every one of His children in countless ways. We can see expressions of His love in the little things we take for granted in nature, like the miraculous dawning of a new day, the breath-taking mountaintops that are capped with the new fallen snow, and even in the colorful rainbows that line the sky after a refreshing rain. Expressions of God's love can also be seen, felt, and experienced in the ways that He blesses us with family and friends to love and share our lives with. His love is expressed in the form of guidance and direction that is always

there for us when we seek it. Like a true friend, His love is expressed by the ways He comforts us in the midst of our pain and sorrow and so graciously lends His listening ear to hear and soothe the worries and fears that sometimes steal our peace and happiness.

His love is expressed in the fact that He provides for our every need and protects us in ways that only He can., But the greatest expression of His love is the fact that He sent His very own Son so that we would have life and have it more abundantly. Jesus is the perfect demonstration of God's unconditional love for us as He gave His only Son to lay down His life for our benefit. No other form of expression of love can top this generous act and it is because of this love that we can love Him and then extend the same love to others.

Furthermore, His love is always available. It is something that never fades. It is an unconditional, everlasting love that does not waver or change over time. It is not based on what we do, what we have, or what we achieve. His love plays no favorites, as He loves and cherishes each of His children the same. His love is the candle that lights our lives, and as we experience the various expressions of it, our lives

flicker with peace and hope. So, on this Valentines' Day and in all your days to come, I encourage you to look for all the ways you experience the expressions of God's love. It may be something directly from Him, or it may be

His sending that special someone into your life who brings blessings upon you and who is themselves an expression of His unwavering, unconditional love. I want to wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day.

May you experience and give thanks for all the expressions of love that God has for you and then pass that same gift on to others in ways that will bring honor and glory to Him!

Candee Liston

**See What great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.**

**~ 1 John 3:1**



# 2012 MISSIONS CHALLENGE

Because of the struggles of last year, the missions committee felt it was necessary to drop our support for a few of our missionaries for 2012. We continue to support the Muckle Family serving with TEAM in Spain, and the Zirk Family serving independently in Latvia. We are no longer sending regular support to; The Blewett Family, Don Stephens, or Trans World Radio. Locally, we continue to support the Union Rescue Mission, Cedar Ridge Ministries, and He's Alive Radio. However, we stopped support for Daybreak Ministries. Leaving us with a missions budget or faith promise budget of \$7,572 for 2012.

On New Year's Day I challenged everyone to stretch their missions giving this year, so that we, as a church can stretch our missionary support in 2012. Here are a few of the mission goals that I have for the church this year. First, I would like to see us not only meet our missions budget for 2012, but double our missions budget by the end of the year. In order to meet our missions budget for 2012, we need to receive \$631 for missions every month. In other words, we need 53 people to commit to giving \$3/week to missions to meet our current budget. If we want to double our budget, reinstate our old missionaries, and maybe even

take on some new missionaries, we simply need to double our missions giving. We can do that by doubling the number of people giving to missions (106), double the amount that people are giving to missions (53 people giving \$6/week), or any combination of the two.



## Great News!

We are able to cover our missions giving for the month of January from just the first three weeks of the month. Great job! But let's not stop there. Let's continue to work

Rescue through donations and financial giving in the past. I would like us to continue that much needed support, as well as expand our support by getting involved in some hands on ministry with Union Rescue. I will be meeting with Rev. Dan soon to discuss ways that we can accomplish that goal.

My third mission goal for this year is to have the church take a short-term mission trip. Several people have discussed their interest in such a trip and I would like to explore the possibilities of such a trip. If you would be interested in such a trip and would like to help with the planning, please contact Pastor Jim.

# CHALLENGE

everything is new • 2012



towards doubling our missions giving. Don't forget that you can give toward missions any week of the month. We will no longer be accepting a missions offering on the first Sunday of each month. Instead, you may designate on your offering envelope exactly how much you would like directed to the missions budget. If you are writing a check, you can write one check and designate on the offering envelope how you would like it divided. Thanks.

My second mission goal for 2012 is for us to partner more closely with the Union Rescue Mission. Grace Memorial Community Church has been a tremendous support to Union

While this may sound like a lot of new things on top of our regular missions projects like Shoes for Orphan Souls and Operation Christmas Child, I believe that it is all well within our reach and that God will bless us with the funds and the workers that we need if we are faithful in doing His work to build His kingdom here in Cumberland and beyond.

**And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.**

~ Hebrews 10:24

# HELPING OTHERS ...

An update on the Community Service Fund:

The Community Service Fund at Grace Memorial Community Church has always been very active in helping people in our church and community. The fund was set up to assist those in need with physical and/or financial needs. We have helped people with food, clothing, housing, utility bills, etc... For many years, this fund was overseen by Troy Campbell and a Community Service Committee that decided how to help people with the funds available. In October, Troy decided that it was time to retire from this position. We want to thank Troy for his many years of faithful service and administration

of the Community Service Fund. The Community Service Fund is now under the direction of the Deacons and the pastor. In 2012, we have decided to partner with the Department of Social Services to help us reach more people in need. Here is how our partnership with Social Services will work.

When the church receives a call for assistance the secretary will screen the call and determine whether the caller is a member, immediate family member of a member or regular attender at Grace Memorial Community Church.

*If the person is not a member, immediate family member of a member or regular attender, they will be referred to Social Services for assistance. Social Services will collect all the necessary information and do a complete check to make sure that the requestor has exhausted all levels of public assistance before asking the church for financial assistance. If there is still a gap between public assistance and the requestors*

*need, Social Services will call the church and ask for assistance to help the person in need. All assistance through Social Services will be paid directly to the creditor rather than the requestor or Social Services.*

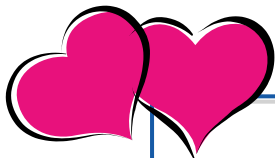
*The church has agreed to assist Social Services with any request for food, clothing, temporary housing, medical, and housing/utility bills up to \$50 per request, and a maximum of \$250 per month.*

*If the person is a member, immediate family member of a member, or regular attender at Grace, then their request will be passed along to the pastor and the deacons to discuss how the church can assist the person in need. All requests and requestors will remain confidential. These requests will be handled on a case by case basis. Members and regular attenders of Grace Memorial Community Church may also make requests on behalf of someone else if they become aware of a need in the church or community.*

*How have we helped recently?*

- In November, we were able to help a father and his two sons remain in their apartment for Thanksgiving with some rental assistance.
- In December, we were able to provide an overflowing basket full of food and a Christmas ham to a family in need.
- So far this year, we have partnered with Social Services two times to help people in need meet their utility bills.

We are excited about this new opportunity to help even more people in need in our community. May God continue to bless this church and the Community Service Fund as we reach out to bless others.



## INCLEMENT WEATHER

In times of inclement weather we may change service times or cancel services. You will have easy access to this information by visiting our website at [www.gracememorial.net](http://www.gracememorial.net).

If you do not have internet access, you may call the church office at 301-777-1670 and press # 3 for updated service times and/or cancellations.

# KID'S CORNER

