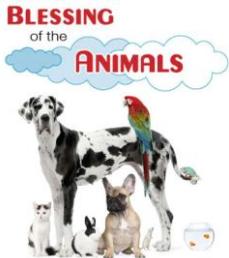


GraceNotes



A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newton, NC
Volume 218, Number 10 **October 2015**



SATURDAY
OCTOBER 3rd
11:00 AM

ALPHA Bible Study Continues



October 24th
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Fall Festival &
Trunk 'n Treat



Service for Healing
October 28th
at 7:00 PM



Union Church
4:00 PM
October 25th



Reformation Sunday
October 25th

From the Pastor's Pen...



When Martin Luther posted his “Ninety-five Theses” on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517, no one expected the breadth of evangelical reforms in Christian teaching and practice that followed. In every dimension of Christian faith a renewed trust in God’s forgiving mercy replaced a reliance on teachings and practices that, like the sale of indulgences, were vulnerable to abuse and corruption.

Preaching a few years later, Luther said, “I opposed indulgences ... but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word; otherwise I did nothing. I did nothing; the Word did everything.” When he began to propose reforms in worship, he wrote similar words. “This is the sum of the matter: let everything be done so that the Word may have free course.”

Nearly 500 years later, the results of this evangelical confidence in God’s forgiving and liberating Word are evident today in Christian communities of all types. In these years leading to 2017, NALC congregations and districts will observe the anniversary of this evangelical reformation in a variety of ways with numerous partners.

At Grace we hope to observe Reformation 2015 with the Annual Hymn Sing on October 25. I hope each of you will avail yourself the opportunity to celebrate and remember the work of Martin Luther and the Reformation and all that had to happen for us to gather each Sunday to worship our Lord Jesus Christ. May this Reformation Spirit be a part of your daily life. Give thanks to God who has brought us this rich and blessed gift and will lead us into the future.

See you in Worship and all around Grace!
Pastor Gil Gilbert, STS

WORSHIP ASSISTANTS FOR OCTOBER

- ❖ Communion Assistants -
- ❖ Ushers - Cole Leatherman, Gary Leatherman, Harvey Leatherman
- ❖ Greeter - Marjorie McDaniel
- ❖ Altar Preparation - Nicky Jarrett
- ❖ Children's Church - Pat Dietz
- ❖ Nursery -

NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE as events occur, such as illness, surgery, births, weddings, funerals, etc. so that the prayer list can be updated, or information added to the monthly newsletter. All events are important in the life at Grace Church and can easily be shared with friends and neighbors by bulletin, newsletter, and/or phone tree.

OUR COLLEGE STUDENTS are often forgotten while they are away at college. A greeting, encouraging word, or even a "care package" from members of their Grace family would be most welcome. The addresses we received were:

Andrew Crouse
307 Apartments Heights Drive M8
Blacksburg VA 24060

Josh Fulbright
229 Bagley Avenue
Wilmington NC 28409

Emily Crouse
Mars Hill College
PO Box 5191
Mars Hill NC 28754

Jordan Fulbright
255 Barnard Avenue Apt. 102
Asheville NC 28804

FRED T. FOARD SENIORS are taking a trip to the Wohlfahrt Haus Dinner Theatre in Wytheville, VA on Tuesday, November 17th. Enjoy a delicious Holiday feast before you are completely immersed in the Christmas season. The Holiday Spectacular is stuffed with all the Christmas songs you know and love as well as dazzling dance numbers and beautiful costumes. This fun-filled Holiday production also features a breath-taking Nativity which is sure to put the whole family in the Christmas Spirit. The cost for dinner and the play is \$41.12 and the money is ***due by October 5th***. Checks should be made payable to "Loiselle Hedgepath" and may be given to Lorene Heavner. The buses/vans will leave from Sardis Lutheran Church at 9:00 AM on November 17th. All are welcome to attend this event, even if you are NOT a senior! (LH)

THE ANNUAL REFORMATION CONFERENCE will be held on October 29, 2015 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte and sponsored by the Michael C.D. McDaniel Center for Theology. This year's theme is Discipleship. What does discipleship look like that is faithful to the Biblical witness by being fruitful ambassadors of the gospel in the 21st century. Both presenters, Stever Turnbull and Roy A. Harrisville III, are New Testament scholars serving in parish ministry. Registration begins at 1:30 PM and the program will start at 2:00 PM. A tour of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary will be included in the agenda as well as dinner at the Seminary. The day will conclude with Reformation Worship at 6:30 PM in the Gordon-Conwell Chapel with The Rev. Dr. Mary Havens preaching. This event is open to everyone. The registration fee is \$40.00, which includes dinner, and is due by October 25th. See Pastor Gil or the Church Office for a registration form. If you wish to just attend the worship service, you do not need to register. (KH)

NEW EVERY MEMBER RESPONSE CAMPAIGN TO BEGIN IN OCTOBER

A new EMR Campaign will be distributed to every member of the Grace congregation in early October. This is to insure that every member has the opportunity to volunteer for certain ministries within the congregation. Every member will receive a packet with a Time and Talent form listing all the ministries of the congregation. Members are to check those ministries they are interested in and would like to volunteer. This will give the Leadership Ministry Board some idea as to how to plan for the coming year. We hope to have 100% participation with this campaign so be on the lookout for more information to come. (PG)

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM PRACTICE is coming up in October. A sign-up sheet for children, youth and adults willing to participate and/or assist with the presentation will be placed beside the Learning Hour Office door. Date for the program will be Sunday, December 13th at 4:00 PM. (JH)

QUILTS FOR NEPAL and LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Thanks to the many quilters who answered the call for quilts for the Nepal Earthquake Disaster Relief Ministry, (or wherever else God needs them). I wanted to let you know we will be sending a total of 85 quilts to the LWR Warehouse in New Windsor MD soon, thanks to members of Grace Lutheran/Newton, Point of Grace/Cornelius, Threads of Grace/Charlotte, and the Scraps of Love Quilting Ministry.

LWR does ask for a \$2.25 per quilt donation to Lutheran World Relief when we deliver the quilts to the warehouse. This fee helps them cover some of the shipping costs to have them delivered overseas. We have already received so many generous donations of fabric, time and talent that our quilting ministries will continue to serve the needy. However, it is not too late for anyone who wants to add their support for the ministry with cash donations for the shipping. Let's see how quickly we can raise the \$200.00 for LWR shipping!

We will be tracking our gifts online through the LWR website. We won't know WHO receives them, but we will know WHERE (country or disaster relief area) they go. The best part? All the men, women & children receiving them will feel & know the love of Jesus through them. Each quilt is FILLED with LOVE, PRAYERS, and BLESSINGS. Praise God!

I thank God for all my brothers and sisters in Christ. I am truly blessed to be part of this wonderful ministry and a member of our faith communities. God has chosen US! Thanks for opening your hearts. Many blessings to you and I will keep everyone posted with the shipping details! God loves you and so do I!

Your Sister in Christ,
Lois Reynolds

REQUESTS FOR FAVORITE HYMNS are now being taken for the Union Church Annual Hymn Sing to be held October 25th at 4:00 PM. Invite friends and neighbors for a great time of song, fellowship, and praise to our Lord. List your favorites on the back of your Worship Today Forms by name or hymnal and page number. If you have a favorite that is not in any of the hymnals in the pew just list the name. Joy will find the music and words. The "Brothers Biggerstaff and friends" will join us again this year by "picking" and "strumming" and singing some of their favorite songs. And there will be a little time for "solo" performances as well. Mark your calendars. (JH)

ANOTHER "NEW" ITEM AT GRACE. Just in time for Homecoming this year, the sanctuary at Grace became officially "accessible" for those requiring more space for walkers and wheelchairs. Two pews were adapted on the Pulpit side of the sanctuary, and two more on the Lectern side will be completed shortly. Along with the ramp at the front entrance, the double doors, plus ramps to the lower level of the Church, lower ramp to Picnic Shelter and Fellowship Hall, plus ramp to the rear entrance of the Union Church, Grace is fully accessible at all locations. With the change out of lighting panels earlier in the year, the Grace Sanctuary certainly has a new look. Pastor Gilbert had recommended both of these items, and with work by members of the congregation, both were completed. (JH)

REGISTRATIONS FOR VIA DE CRISTO WEEKENDS are now being accepted. For more information or to register for an upcoming weekend, please speak with Sherry Biggerstaff, Sheila Drum, Don or Nicky Jarrett, David or Iris Sigmon, or Pastor Gil or Karen Gilbert.

REQUEST FOR MENUS when hosting meals at the church has been received. Due to dietary restrictions it is helpful to some, if the menu for an event can be published in the newsletter and/or bulletin prior to the event. Thank you for your help in being considerate of others needs.

THOSE SERVING AS NURSERY ATTENDANTS AND CHILDREN'S CHURCH LEADERS are asked to record those attending both of these events each Sunday morning. We are trying to evaluate how best to serve the children during Worship. There is a clipboard with an attendance sheet attached. At the end of worship the sheet can be placed in the Church Office mailbox or on the desk in the Church Office. Volunteers are greatly needed to serve in these areas. Please notify the Church Office if you would like to help. (JH)

FIRST SUNDAY LUNCH AND SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST

These special events have been a tradition at Grace during the late Fall, Winter, and Early Spring. These meals provide an excellent time to have fellowship with other members, get to know them, and have the opportunity to make long lasting friendships.

There have been families that have stepped up and volunteered to prepare the meals for these monthly events. Typically the members that provide the meal "divvy" up the costs of the food among themselves. The congregation is asked to bring desserts for lunch, and Grace as a congregation provides tea and coffee. The congregation can make donations and monies received go to special projects designated by the particular providers of the event.

Extra hands are most welcome to participate. Check your schedules and let the Church Office know what month you can be on hand to assist. If a particular group of people, or a family wants to cover a particular Sunday, again, please call the Church Office. New participation is always welcome, but even if you "have always done it", please verify with the Church Office that you are willing to continue in 2015/2016. Breakfast preparation begins around 7:30 AM or 8:00 AM on the 2nd Sunday. For lunch preparation, a few come early before service, or leave following communion in the worship service to provide help. Of course, clean up and set up is all a part of the event. This is a great time to share some of those wonderful recipes passed down through generations. (JH)

WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE ONLY SURVIVING

by Pastor James McDonald

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV).

When you're overwhelmed by a problem that isn't going to get better in a couple days or even weeks, you might begin to falter. The pressure to falter is great—to slip down, go under, give in, lose the battle—and at times we would falter without an exceedingly great and precious promise from God. You need something larger and stronger than your problems. Serious days call for a serious promise: ***God is always watching; I will not falter.***

God is watching, and He wants you to succeed at the Christian life. Considering His great love for you, do you honestly think He would let you go through more than you can handle? No. He won't let the waters drown you. He will keep the fires from burning you (Isaiah 43:1–2). He won't allow the temptation to become so strong it knocks you off your feet.

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

by Kevin E. Mackin, O.F.M.

As autumn arrives, people in various places may notice something odd. A procession of animals, everything from dogs and cats to hamsters and even horses, is led to churches for a special ceremony called the Blessing of Pets.



This custom is conducted in remembrance of St. Francis of Assisi's love for all creatures. Francis, whose feast day is October 4th, loved the larks flying about his hilltop town. He and his early brothers, staying in a small hovel, allowed themselves to be displaced by a donkey.

Francis wrote a Canticum of the Creatures, an ode to God's living things. "All praise to you, Oh Lord, for all these brother and sister creatures." And there was testimony in the cause for St. Clare of Assisi's canonization that referred to her little cat!

That there are today over 62 million cats in the U.S. attests to the continuing affection we have for our furry, feathered or finned friends. We've even had a cat called Socks in the White House. Other popular presidential pets range from Abraham Lincoln's Fido to Lyndon Johnson's beagles, named Him and Her.

For single householders, a pet can be a true companion. Many people arrive home from work to find a furry friend overjoyed at their return. Many a senior has a lap filled with a purring fellow creature.

The bond between person and pet is like no other relationship, because the communication between fellow creatures is at its most basic. Eye-to-eye, a man and his dog, or a woman and her cat, are two creatures of love.

No wonder people enjoy the opportunity to take their animal companions to church for a special blessing. Church is the place where the bond of creation is celebrated. At Franciscan churches, a friar with brown robe and white cord often welcomes each animal with a special prayer. The Blessing of Pets usually goes like this:

"Blessed are you, Lord God, maker of all living creatures. You called forth fish in the sea, birds in the air and animals on the land. You inspired St. Francis to call all of them his brothers and sisters. We ask you to bless this pet. By the power of your love, enable it to live according to your plan. May we always praise you for all your beauty in creation. Blessed are you, Lord our God, in all your creatures! Amen."

As the prayer is offered, the pet is gently sprinkled with holy water. Believe it or not, most pets receive this sacramental spritz with dignity, though I must admit I have seen some cats flatten their ears a bit as the drops of water lightly pelt them. But the owner is happy, and who knows what spiritual benefits may result?

Some people criticize the amount and cost of care given to pets. People are more important, they say. Care for poor people instead of poodles. And certainly our needy fellow humans should not be neglected. However, I believe every creature is important. The love we give to a pet, and receive from a pet, can draw us more deeply into the larger circle of life, into the wonder of our common relationship to our Creator. *Kevin E. Mackin, O.F.M., is a Franciscan of the Holy Name Province.*

The Blessing of the Animals will be celebrated at Grace on Saturday, October 3rd at 11:00 AM. The Service will be on the lawn in front of the Church, rain or shine. Bring your pets on leash or in a carrying kennel. Water stations and treats will be available. Donations will be accepted for support of the Humane Society. Bring your pets and your friends to this special service. (KH)



A JESUS RESPONSE TO SUICIDE

by Frank Viola

Comedian Robin Williams' recent suicide has once again exposed the different ways that "Christian" people respond to the tragic issue of suicide. Many people of faith who respected Williams for his talent are bemoaning his loss. No Christian I've ever met believes that suicide is a good thing. There is a wide consensus among people of faith — as well as people who don't subscribe to any belief in God — that in many cases, suicide is a selfish act. Indeed, in many cases, the individual committing suicide isn't thinking about the unspeakable pain that will be brought upon her or his loved ones for their entire lives.

However, what if a person isn't in their right mind when they pull the trigger (so to speak)? What if they are so sullen that they can't see or even think straight? (With regard to Williams, it's recently been revealed that he was experiencing hallucinations associated with his Parkinson's disease.) Surely, every person reading this article has made a hasty decision, a decision based on faulty or screwed thinking. Surely every person reading this article has done something foolish in a moment of intense despair, intense confusion, intense temptation, intense pain. Only to deeply regret it later.

On that basis, one must extend grace to those who choose to end their lives in a profound moment of despair, temptation, confusion, or pain (Matthew 7:12). No one knows whether or not Williams, upon his last breath or two, said, "God, I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. I don't understand it all, but I receive your Son."

Perhaps he didn't. But such judgments are staked out by Divinity alone. Only God knows his heart.

Regrettably, some "Christians" are condemning Williams to hell *because* of the suicide. Last time I checked the Bible, people are judged by God for willfully rejecting Jesus Christ — the Savior of the world — not for a particular sin, mistake, or transgression.

If Williams did — or doesn't — receive eternal life, it's not because of any particular sin he committed. Nor is it because he chose to end his life. It will be because he willfully rejected the only One who gives eternal life . . . the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Eternal Life Himself. Phil Cooke points out that just days after the tragic death of actor and comedian Robin Williams, some "Christians" were coming up with the "answers," and (surprise) pitching their DVD's in the process. Some of them were stating, "*Robin Williams acknowledged that he had opened himself up to transformative demonic powers that aided him on stage.*"

Cooke writes, "*Having worked in Hollywood for more than 30 years, I can tell you the idea Robin's talking about in the quote isn't "demon possession" but a common term actors use to fill a character. I'm sure writer Joe Schimmel is trying to do the right thing, but using that quote as a guide, he would have to (and perhaps does) assume every actor and comedian in Hollywood is demon possessed.*

But even more important is the question – did this writer ever actually speak to Robin? Did he counsel him? Did he even have a lengthy personal interview? If not, how can he make such sweeping and insensitive statements – particularly within hours of Robin's death?

We wonder why Christians are marginalized by the culture and wonder why non-believers aren't interested in anything we have to say. Well go no further than this article (and I'm sure plenty from others that will be coming.)

There is evil in the world. There is demonic activity in the world. But there is also mental illness. Of all the people in the culture, Christians should be more sensitive than anyone during times of tragedy.

And I'll no doubt get the "But Phil – we must speak the Truth" argument back. That's true as well. But when that is required, it is a grave and serious responsibility – not an opportunity to pitch our latest DVD. And perhaps more important – when Christians make grand judgements and

pronouncements, they should be based on rock solid evidence, not fragments of interviews or our own assumptions. I'm reminded of the quote from writer Anne Lamott: "You don't always have to chop with the sword of truth. You can point with it too."

Think about the bigger picture here. Do articles like this really advance the Kingdom? Do they cause readers to be so convicted that they want to turn to God? Or do they simply feed the stereotype that Christians are insensitive jerks, who are more concerned about condemning than caring?

During times like this, our hearts should burn. WE should be consumed with guilt that we haven't done enough to share the Good News. And not take an attitude that will simply drive away the very people we are trying to reach."

I've said this numerous time before. But why do so many people not want to have anything to do with Jesus? It's because of the cruel, harsh, self-righteous, and judgmental attitude that some professing "Christians" level against people they've never met . . . as well as fellow believers. "Why would I want to be part of that bunch!?" . . . is the common response by so many non-Christians today. The sentiment is growing among true Jesus followers as well.

If Christians cannot extend grace through faithful presence within the body of believers, they will not be able to extend grace to those outside.

I remember reading a book by Watchman Nee in my youth. In it, Nee made the remark that he observed a certain pattern throughout his life. Every time someone judged another person harshly for a mistake they made or because of something that went wrong in their lives, sometime later, the person who made those harsh judgments had something far worse happen to them.

Having been a Christian for over 30 years now, I've observed the same pattern. Consequently, I fear for those who made these deplorable remarks. The Scriptures clearly teach that how we treat others is how the Lord will treat us. And if we have the knife out for one of His children, we will eventually end up falling on it ourselves. St. Paul said you will reap what you sow. That's written in the heavens.

So be very, very careful how you respond to someone else's tragedy, mistakes, pain, or loss. I read the New Testament once :-) and Jesus taught that the entire Law and the Prophets is fulfilled in this one statement: *Treat others the way you want to be treated in every circumstance.* How would YOU want to be treated if you lost a child, a friend, a spouse, a parent, etc.? How we respond to bad things that happen to others (be they tragedies, failures, or pain) is a barometer that reveals how well we know our Lord. In fact, there may be no greater test.

BEAUTIFUL IN CHRIST

by Anne Graham Lotz

- *The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good."* (Genesis 1:12, NIV)
- *He has made everything beautiful in its time.* (Ecclesiastes 3:11, NKJV)

Through the power of His Word, God brought beauty to the barrenness and added color to the drabness. God did not create anything new. He just called it forth from what was already present, because apparently that which was necessary for plant life was in the soil. It doesn't matter if you life has always been dry, barren, bleak, desolate, and ugly, or if it has become that way because of some tragedy or crisis. If you submit your life to the skillful touch of the Creator, He has the power to transform you into someone who is beautiful - beautiful not because of a toned physique or a perfect figure or manageable hair but because the life of Christ radiates from within you; His joy sparkling from your eyes, His love lighting up your face.



New Items for October **IT OUT!!!!**

1. The Power of Praying for Your Adult Children by Stormie Omartian
"Lord, teach me how to pray for my adult children." This is a MUST READ for everyone with an adult child!
2. Far from Here by Nicole Baart (fiction)
3. GRACE by Max Lucado
"More than we deserve - Greater than we imagine"
"Few writers are better than Max Lucado, no subject is better than God's grace."
Randy Alcorn
4. The Harbinger by Jonathan Cahn
New York Times Best Seller
5. Life Among the Lutherans by Garrison Keillor (donated by Steve Suther)
"A collection of stories about the struggles of ordinary people."

If you have a subject, author, or book you would like our library to purchase, please put it in the suggestion box in the library.

HAVE YOU VISITED YOUR LIBRARY THIS MONTH???

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW?

What is a Christian worldview? Why is it even important to know about? Should every Christian hold a biblical worldview?

A Worldview = Everybody actually has a worldview. It depends on how they view the world through their presuppositions. Every one of us have presuppositions, whether we realize it or not and we tend to use our presuppositions as lens by which we look at the world and society. In today's culture, worldviews are primarily shaped through the media, education, the Internet, books, movies or any other source of media that's available in this technologically advances world. Our view of the world is also shaped by our family setting and our culture. Some have simply absorbed what they see and hear and accept that as being true. You and I have worldview but we may see the world through different lenses based upon what we believe. We even make decisions based upon the view we hold too.

A Secular Worldview = Worldly viewpoints, which are held by most who are not believers, don't think much past this life. They are only preoccupied with their immediate families, making as much money as possible. Most see life as events that just happen with no significant meaning behind them because life is just a series of events that occur in random order and that even life itself was a product of blind chance or accidental causes. There is no real purpose beyond "eat, drink, and be

merry” and working for the weekend. This breeds humanism, moral relativism, existentialism, pragmatism, and utopianism.

A Christian Worldview = A Christian’s worldview is considered a part of Christian apologetics and is designed to equip people to think and live with a consistent and cohesive Biblical worldview despite the way the world looks at things. A Christian worldview knows that God exists (Heb. 11:6) and that He created everything that exists (Gen.1:1), all things are held together by Him (Col. 1:17), the Bible is God’s divinely inspired Word, (2 Tim. 3:16), that Jesus came to earth and lived in the human body (Col. 1:19), that mankind has chosen to rebel against God and that act of disobedience brought sin and by sin, death entered the world (Rom. 5:12-14; 6:23), and finally that there are not many paths to God but Jesus Christ is the only way to have eternal life (Acts 16:30-31) and have our sins forgiven (Acts 4:10-12).

Differences in Worldviews

When Christians and non-believers look at the world, they see things from a different perspective. An example would be when two people hear about an abortion. Most believers will see the tragedy in the killing of the unborn and understand that, biblically, it is murder. Most who are not Christians will see abortion as as an alternative or a choice that a mother can make. One sees it as clearly wrong while the other sees abortion as a means to end to the inconvenience of having a baby around. They don’t see abortion coming as a result of having premarital sex or sex outside of marriage. The views are as different as night and day.

No matter what worldview you hold to, every one of us will have to stand before God someday (Rev 20:12-15). Jesus warned that “on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak” (Matt 12:36) and it will be “by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12:37). Paul reminds us that “each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12) and after our appointed day of death, the judgment comes (Heb 9:27). The fact is “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2nd Cor 5:10) and we shouldn’t be concerned with how much non-believers insult us because we receive God’s blessing when they hate us, despise us, and lie about us for our belief in Christ (Matt 5:10-12). Christians can take comfort in the fact that “they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1st Pet 4:5) and so there is no need to “fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). These beliefs are also what we call a Christian worldview.

Article by Pastor Jack Wellman of the Brethren Church in Mulvane, Kansas and author of “What Christians Want to Know” and the children’s series, “Teaching Children the Gospel” available from Amazon. (PG)

THE WONDER IN EVERY MOMENT

It started snowing with us in the last week of November and continued until just after Christmas. At first, the snow looked astonishingly beautiful as it rested neatly on everything in sight. But after a few days of getting stuck in the ice and cold, it became more difficult to appreciate. That’s when everyone started to complain. They complained about the lack of grit, the disruption to the buses and trains, the closed schools, the missing shoppers, the freezing cold, our woeful lack of preparation, the heating bills, and on and on. It got me thinking about how easy we move from a feeling of appreciation for the things in life to a feeling of disgruntlement when they don’t go our way.

One of the first things I was taught at work was to notice the difference between the 3 C’s of

complaining, condemning and criticizing and the 3 A's of acceptance, acknowledging, and appreciation and to always replace the 3 C's with the 3 A's.

That lesson has served me well in the years since. I remember in particular one individual who was unremittingly hostile to me for no particular reason. There was just nothing I could do that seemed to improve his mood. That's when, tempted though I was to apply the 3 C's, I applied the 3 A's instead. On that occasion, I used a technique I have since taught to others, which is to see the jewels in other people's crowns even if they're not always obvious. I did this with this person and started to find things about him to appreciate. Very soon, our relationship started to change and in time he became a firm friend.

Not so long ago, I happened to be reading a story by writer Alan Cohen who says that we are all tempted to play victim in life when things don't seem to go our way. But playing victim doesn't serve us. It makes us feel hurt and small. And the amazing thing is, it's only a small shift on the perceptual scale from being a victim to being a healer. This is how he tells the story.

A man was walking down a street one day when a flowerpot fell from an upstairs window and crashed onto the pavement just inches from where he was walking. The man paused and considered what he should do. He thought about three possibilities. Firstly, he could see the incident as a warning sign and immediately go and buy some kind of protective clothing. Secondly, he could see himself as a victim and immediately sue the owner of the flowerpot for the distress he might have experienced. Thirdly, he could go straight to a florist, buy another flower in a pot and give it to the owner to replace the one he lost. Which is what he did.

I think there's a thread running from the appreciation of snowfall to the appreciation of what are usually thought of as bad moments. It's the realization that every moment in life gives us the chance to experience the essential healing nature of the universe. In snowfalls, it's easier to see than in seemingly unpleasant people or near-miss accidents. But the lesson is there just the same. It's not just appreciating the obviously beautiful but appreciating the rest. Life shouldn't be about the occasional wonderful moments. But about the wonder in every moment. (c) ManageTrainLearn (KG)

WHAT IF...

- What if God couldn't take the time to bless us today because we couldn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?
- What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?
- What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain?
- What if God didn't walk with us today because we failed to recognize it as His day?
- What if God took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?
- What if God took away His message because we failed to listen to the messenger?
- What if God didn't send His only begotten Son because He wanted us to be prepared to pay the price for sin.
- What if the door of the church was closed because we did not open the door of our heart?
- What if God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to love and care for others?
- What if God would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him?
- What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?
- What if God met our needs the way we give Him our lives???

ANOTHER OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX STORY

(Irina received her shoebox at an orphanage in the former Soviet Union at age 10)

My favorite thing in my shoebox was a pencil sharpener. I didn't get many toys and that was the biggest one so that's why I really liked it. It was in the shape of a dinosaur. At first I didn't know it was a pencil sharpener but then I saw the hole. I just thought it was so creative. I'm a creative person so I really appreciated that aspect of it.

Hairclips were something that I really wanted because my hair was down to my hips. We lived across the street from the market so we would wander around and dream about what we would buy if we could afford it. My dream was always from the hairclip stand. Then I got some in my shoebox! They were really special to me.

The other thing that I still cherish to this day was a notebook. It was small and had a little spiral on it. I and the other girls would use it to write our secrets. We'd ask each other to write something special, kind of like you do in yearbooks. It was so much fun. I still have it. I read it every now and again to see what my old friends said about me. It was my treasure.

Most importantly, when I received my shoebox I learned about Jesus. I had heard about God but I had not heard about Jesus and that makes all the difference in the world. They explained that He died on the cross so that we could become His. To me that meant that God is the God of adoption, and adoption is every orphan's dream.

They encouraged us to pray to Him as a loving Father who wants to hear from us. I thought, "This is the Man that could make it happen". So I decided I'd go big and ask Him for my biggest dream. It was exciting to pray for the first time. I went outside and said, "God, I'm not sure if You're real, but it sure sounds good to me. I've been disappointed before, though, so I want to hear from You directly. I'm going to take this bunch of leaves and throw them up in the air. If the leaves blow to the left I will know You hear me, but if they blow in any other direction, well forget it." I thought, Surely He can control the leaves.

I threw up the leaves and they blew left. So I said, "All right, here's my real prayer request. God, allow me and my sister to be adopted."

This was the beginning of my relationship with God even though I didn't know much about Him other than He was loving and He was in control of the earth.

A year later I got my miracle when a family in South Carolina adopted my sister and me. I knew that God is a powerful God the way I'd been told. It was confirmed to me that what they said was true. It was exciting!

The shoebox was the beginning of my understanding about God. It was a gateway to realizing that He loves me. It meant hope to me. It was the beginning of my faith and was a huge gift to me. The blessing at first was the gift and the toys. I don't have them anymore (except for the hairclips and the notebook), but my faith continues to grow and bear fruit.

This particular gift is something I will never forget. Now I am able to extend the gift to other people as I pack shoeboxes with my husband and family and encourage other people to participate. It's such a privilege to be on this side of the shoebox. It is so much better to give than to receive. I must say I loved my gift and I received it with such joy, but the gift keeps on giving.

Pastor Dave Charlton tells us, "After a worship service at First Baptist Church in Newcastle, Kentucky, a mother with a fidgety seven-year old boy told me how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, 'If you don't be quiet, Pastor Charlton is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!' It worked."

LEADERSHIP BOARD NOTES 9/13/15...

- Called to order by President Tim Eckard.
 - Stephanie Fulbright shared the devotion based on James 3:13 ff.
 - Board continued its study of the text, "The Emotionally Healthy Church" with lively discussion.
 - Minutes from the August meeting were read and approved.
 - Revised Constitution has been sent to the NALC for review and approval.
 - Guidelines for the use of Fellowship Hall were reviewed and approved.
 - Guidelines for the Memorial Garden and Columbarium were distributed for review and will be approved at October meeting.
 - NALC Group Ruling for Non-Profits was approved.
 - Worship:
 - Children to have Music Time during Learning hour on Sunday mornings.
 - Choir to provide First Sunday Lunch in November.
 - Advent and Christmas planning is underway.
 - Annual Hymn Sing on Reformation Sunday, October 25 at 4 PM in Union Church.
 - Solicited more support for the Contemporary Worship.
 - Property:
 - Pastor requested electrician inspect fixtures in parsonage.
 - Storage Room in Fellowship Hall needs cleaning out and walls sealed. De-Humidifier to be purchased to run constantly upon completion of sealing walls.
 - Main front doors of Church need repairing again.
 - Remaining two pews on left side will need to be shortened to match work done before Thanksgiving.
 - Lights out in rear of Union Church.
 - Both side entrances lights off parking lot need replacing.
 - Witness:
 - Mapping in progress of new NALC signage being done and signs will be ordered.
 - Volunteers needed to erect signage.
 - Stewardship: No Report
 - Outreach:
 - ECCCM now has gift envelopes. These will be ordered and placed in the narthex.
 - Learning:
 - ALPHA Class will begin September 17th and will be offered on Thursdays at 10 AM and 6 PM.
 - Treasurer's Report: Approved and Received as information.
- Meeting adjourned with prayer by Pastor Gilbert.
Next Meeting: October 18, 4 pm.



"A man from 'Ripley's Believe It or Not!' want a picture of someone on fire for the Lord."



Treasurer's Report for
August
2015

YTD

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	16,774.22
Deposits	13,009.00
Expenses	14,265.07
Ending Balance	15,518.15
Memorial Fund	
Beginning Balance	19,982.76
Deposits	1,000.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	20,982.76
Building Fund	
Beginning Balance	-709.47
Deposits	515.09
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	-194.38
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	140,127.93
Deposits	262.50
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	140,390.43
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	44,805.58
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	39.29
Ending Balance	44,766.29
Playground Equipment Fund	
Beginning Balance	3,109.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	3,109.52
All Funds	
Beginning Balance	224,090.54
Deposits	14,786.59
Expenses	14,304.36
Ending Balance	224,572.77

General Fund	
Beginning Balance	32,617.90
Deposits	86,454.94
Expenses	103,554.69
Ending Balance	15,518.15
Memorial Fund	
Beginning Balance	26,281.90
Deposits	2,335.00
Expenses	7,634.14
Ending Balance	20,982.76
Building Fund	
Beginning Balance	-2,118.08
Deposits	3,610.70
Expenses	1,687.00
Ending Balance	-194.38
Cemetery Fund	
Beginning Balance	89,418.20
Deposits	54,632.88
Expenses	3,660.65
Ending Balance	140,390.43
Union Church Restoration	
Beginning Balance	45,013.64
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	247.35
Ending Balance	44,766.29
Playground Equipment Fund	
Beginning Balance	3,109.52
Deposits	0.00
Expenses	0.00
Ending Balance	3,109.52
All Funds	
Beginning Balance	194,323.08
Deposits	147,033.52
Expenses	116,783.83
Ending Balance	224,572.77

Grace Notes

**Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church N.A.L.C.
4536 Hickory Lincolnton Highway
Newton, NC 28658**

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly