

The Tie That Binds

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



www.gracechurchsh.org

8375 Spring Hill Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34608
352-683-2082

PASTOR'S CORNER

by Rev. Chet Okopski

It's odd for me to be speaking about church growth in August, when our church attendance hits rock bottom. However, there are lots of signs of growth around us. We welcomed three new members in July... in July! And there are lots of new faces around the church. Please, please, share your pew. And please don't ask folks to move out of "your pew" on Sunday morning. That's not welcoming behavior. Our Church is growing, and we all need to grow in God's Grace and Love.

Now not all churches are growing. We are very blessed. According to the American Society for Church Growth, the Church across America isn't doing very well. Read this: Research indicates that only 4 percent of the generation born between 1977-1994 are churchied. (*Kreider & McClung "Starting a House Church, A New Model for Living Out Your Faith" page 62*). This concerns me because of my

love for Christ Jesus and the important part the Church has played for 2,000 years in proclaiming the Word of God and administering the Sacraments. It really ought to concern all Christians today that only 4% of the folks born between 1977 and 1994 have a Church home.

We are seeing signs of growth at our church. And I believe that it's going to be even better in the



coming year. I'm not talking about survival of our church home... the building and our hymns. I'm talking about the promulgation of our faith and Christian way of life. If you love Christ, you serve Christ. And if you love Him, you long to see others find God's Grace and understanding for their lives too.

What should you be doing to help spread the Word? Here's just a few things that all of us Christians need to be doing... all of us Christians together, not just the minister.

A. Share your faith.

Don't be ashamed or afraid to tell someone that you're a Christian and that your faith is important to you. It's not about your Church, but



is about your FAITH. However, don't be ashamed to tell folks that you're proud of your Church. The Presbyterian Church has a wonderful history, a witness of great mission causes, like Korea and China, being two nations that we helped to evangelize. We have a history of actions in social justice, and played a great part in the American Revolution. So understand that the Presbyterian Faith is an important witness to freedom of worship and freedom of God's people to rule themselves. You don't need to bring up your denomination to share your faith. But you don't need to be ashamed of it either.

B. Invite friends and acquaintances to worship on Sunday mornings.

Sometimes a person will invite a friend to play golf at their club long before they'll invite the same friend to share their church. Why? Some folks are not Christians simply because they haven't been invited to be one.



C. Remember that life is change.

No part of life remains the same. Every day that you wake up your body is different. Over the course of a few years, every cell in your entire body is a new cell (even in your brain and memory!). What a miracle! Remember, because life is change, your church will

probably change too. And that's OK. These are exciting times in which to live!

D. God teaches us in His Holy Word that if you say you love God and hate your brother, you're just a liar. *"He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."*

(1Jn.4.20) Your best witness for Christ will always be your love for other people. If you show others the love of Christ, then they will



be drawn to you and to Christ. Remember, you are the only Jesus that many are ever going to see. Let your love and your generosity be seen by others. If there's a good cause that helps people, then reach into your pockets. Quit sitting on your wallet! If something is important to you, you will support it. Let your generosity be known. Now I'm not writing that you should brag about your gifts to God. But others will know what's important to you by your wallet. Martin Luther said that there were two conversions: first the soul, then the wallet.

E. Form a Christian small group in your home.

Have a prayer meeting or a Bible Study in your home, and invite friends. These are real connections of faith, and desperately needed personal connections for our times of internet, cell phones and television.

These are just a few ideas for you about spreading faith in Jesus Christ. I hope that you will find a place in the Work of Christ in this world. *"Faith without works is dead,"* the Bible says. For sure the Church needs all of our efforts to be the Witness that Christ has called us to be.

May God Richly Bless You!

Rev. Chet

INTRODUCING REV. SPALDING

While Rev. Chet is on vacation you will get a chance to meet Rev. Neil Spalding. You will think that he looks familiar because he is familiar to our congregation. Rev. Neil sang in the Chancel Choir all last year, and was very active at our Wed. evening suppers. He has a great sense of humor and loves to fellowship. In 2008 Rev. Neil married Ruth Stanton, a member of our choir for 6 years, and when they arrived in Spring Hill, he started attending with her.

Rev. Neil has varied experience in ministry. His last parish (2007) was the Sennett Federated Church, near Auburn, N.Y. This Federated Church was made up of Baptists and Presbyterians. Rev. Spalding started out as a school teacher (history, science, and coaching) then went to the Wayne County Sheriff's Dept. where he worked in a jail ministry and also did some teaching at Finger Lakes Community College in the criminal justice division.

In 1980 he resigned his full time work with the Sheriff's Dept. to become an evangelist. He was a lay pastor licensed by the United Church of Christ, so has varied theological and ecumenical roots in ministry. He'll be working part time for us starting late this fall, as an Assistant Pastor, in the tradition of Rev. Nash, Rev. Clark, and Rev. Sheffield, and has graciously consented to fill in for a couple of weeks this summer while Rev. Sheffield and Rev. Chet will be out of the pulpit.

His hobbies include hunting, model rail-roading, sailing and motorcycling.

He's done evangelistic ministry in Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, Finland, and the Philippines. You will certainly enjoy his open and friendly soul.

REFLECTIONS

By Rev. Douglas Clark

THE LONELIEST ROAD IN AMERICA

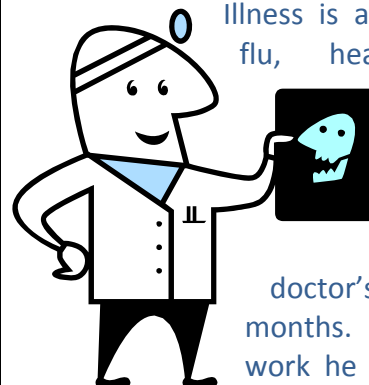
I have never heard of it, but the most memorable thought came during a drive from Phoenix to Seattle. There was a sign at the place where I crossed Nevada's U S Highway 50, stating I was crossing "The loneliest road in America".

The words stuck in my mind and remain one of my best memories of Nevada.

As I pondered the meaning of life, the idea of a lonely road has often stimulated my imagination. I would like to share some of these thoughts with you, for I believe that each of us – at some time in our lives – have known the lonely road experience. For some it may have been brief, as was my crossing of Route 50 in Nevada; for others it has been a longer experience, which continues even today.

The loss of a job today is a lonely road. At one time work was plentiful, and a college education was a guarantee of employment. It is not so today...factories have closed, businesses failed, and the dreaded "pink slip" is found in more pay envelopes. I heard the owner of the most successful Chrysler franchise in Chicago state on television of his sudden notification that his job was history.

Illness is another lonely road. Swine flu, heart attacks, unforeseen accidents have sent many to the hospital, and others to nursing homes when the illness is prolonged. I go to my doctor's for a check up every four months. After scanning the blood work he begins mentioning areas of potential danger such as the liver, heart, lungs, etc.



What a relief when he tells me “nothing is wrong”. Others are not that fortunate and learn they have a fatal disease or the heart or dreaded cancer.

Failure is a lonely road. To receive notification of a failing final grade, the opportunity to graduate, being passed over for a promotion, losing a scholarship...recognizing the bitter fact that

one is below average in intellectual ability are common experiences. The man

behind the lunch counter at McDonald’s may have

dreamed of being an engineer; the young

man who spent

many hours a day shooting baskets

may finally realize he

is

never going to make the team.

Family breakup is an especially lonely road. I know a woman who, when married, was assured she was part of “the ideal couple”. She encountered a lonely road when she came home one night after teaching her university class to an empty house. Taped on the refrigerator was a note from her “perfect mate” saying he had left her for another woman. There had been no prior warning. Others suffer through months or years in failing marriages before reaching the conclusion that the relationships are doomed.

Death is the worst of the lonely roads. Sometimes it is a baby, a child, or teen. It may be late in life, and be unexpected or inevitable. Death means separation from a loved one. The most tragic and loneliest road of all is when the person who does not know Christ passes. Along the road there is no comfort and at the end no heaven, no rejoicing angels, and no welcoming Savior. Only – as Jude says – “...wandering stars, for whom the blackest darkness has been reserved forever”. (v.13)

For the believer, all of the roads are difficult, but not impossible, for Christ is with us. *“I will never leave you nor forsake you, And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”*. (Mt. 27:20) And in that dark valley described by David, *“I will fear no evil for you are with me...I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* (Ps.2)

We all experience the lonely road. What is our role to fellow believers? It is to be loving, supportive, understanding, prayerful, forgiving. That person with the smile may be suffering within. That person who seems to be on top of the world may be wrestling with major problems. They may need a friend to talk with. Why not you?

Which road are you following? Is it the one in which Christ leads, blesses, and provides all the way or is it the broad and lonely road that Jesus said leads to destruction?

The Ohlin Update

www.ohlinupdate.org

FROM PAUL AND DIANE OHLIN

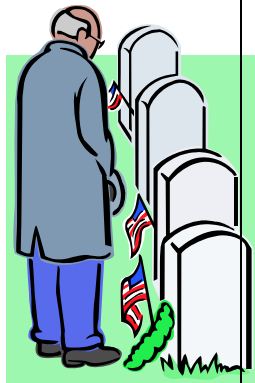
6/27/09

Dear Friends at Grace Presbyterian Church,

We are in the US (NH) preparing to move to NC to start work as missionaries in residence Center for Intercultural Training (CIT) in Union Mills, NC. It will be a chance for us to help launch another generation of missionaries. After working at CIT, we will move on to a ministry in Senegal, West Africa.

I expect to be in Congo in February and March, 2010. Diane will continue to work in CIT in NC. We have a hand in the church planting work of two Congolese church associations. In addition, the Bayaka Pygmy work is really moving forward. I want Hap (our son) to come to Congo with me to see the work as an adult. The US Embassy in Congo might give us some money to fix up the student housing at the Dongou Training Center. Hap will help on that project. Hap graduated from high school at Rain Forest International School in Yaounde, Cameroon. He will start at Isothermal Community College with the idea of one day transferring to NC State.

Josie (our daughter) is with us until she returns to Baylor University in August and will graduate in December. She wants to work in the developing world. On the two week medical mission trip she took to northern Cameroon, her colleagues noted that she had a gift of being able to relate to the



Muslim ladies. I have seen how medical missions can create an openness to the gospel among Muslims.

We never forget your sacrifice to advance the gospel in Central Africa. Please accept our thanks for your partnership with us in the work.

Keep in touch,
Paul and Diane Ohlin
PO Box 250
Union Mills, NC 28167-0250
www.ohlinupdate.org
Telephone 828-803-4559

The sympathy of the entire congregation is extended to the family and friends of the following who went home to be with our Lord:

Doris Case, 2009
Dan Coursey, May 27, 2009

Our prayers and love are with you all.



FROM THE GIDEONS

June 1, 2009

To Rev. Chet Okopski and The Members of Grace Presbyterian Church:

Against all odds, your church has done it again. Your Members have given the largest gift to date for Bibles - \$854. In a time of global recession, this is quite extraordinary. It shows the heart your people have for Jesus and His Gospel. 580 Bibles will be sent out into the world because of your church's faithfulness.

Thanks, Bill Krupp

Announcements:

1. The office will be closed each Wednesday, June – August at 12 noon.
2. The next meeting of the Board of Deacons will be held Thursday, September 10 in Fellowship Hall.

God's Memory Lapse

Our memory bank can churn up some bad stuff occasionally. There you are, not quite asleep, when suddenly a past sin pays a painful visit. The ugly details of bad decisions and actions can leave our spirit in a shambles. How should we handle this haunting problem?



First, we need a visit with God, who knows just how to deal with our painful memories. He has a unique ability to forgive and forget, if we're sincere in our request for reconciliation. As Micah 7:19 (NRSV) says, God "will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

After we accept God's forgiveness, we must forgive ourselves and move on into the future God has for us. St. Paul's words to the Philippians are relevant for Christians struggling with past sins: "One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14, NRSV).

Choir News



The Chancel Choir has been on break for the summer. The Grace Singers will sing occasionally through the summer and

special music will be scheduled for each Sunday. Regular rehearsals will begin again on the last Wednesday evening in August. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Choir President, Joyce Flint, who can be reached in the evening at 727-869-1152.

MESSAGE TO THE LADIES

When you join Grace Presbyterian Church, you are part of Presbyterian Women (PW). Please plan on coming to one of the Women's Circles that begin again in September. Your first gathering will be a **Baked Potato Luncheon (Spud-A-Li-Cious)** with all the fixings. This is planned for Monday, November 9th and we hope the men will join us.

Ephesians 3:20-21

"I pray that Christ Jesus and the church will forever bring praise to God. His power at work in us can do far more than we dare ask or imagine. Amen." (CEV)

I don't know who said the following, but I wanted to share it with you: "Use your uniqueness to make a big deal out of God everyday."

God Bless you,

Cheryl Kopia, PW Moderator 727-857-4951

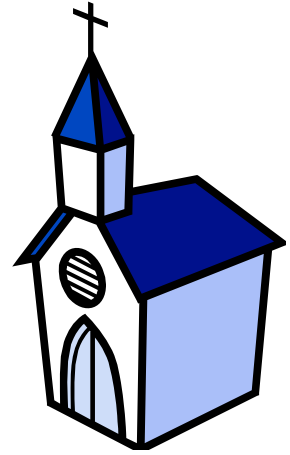
Children's Sunday School

It seems like only yesterday that we had our last Sunday School Class in May, and now we're getting ready for a new session to start in September - Sunday, the 13th to be exact. Mark your calendars and plan on some fun times with lively Bible study, great music, interesting crafts, and some time in the kitchen too!!! We're going to put Bible truths to work where it counts - in our everyday life! Remember, classes will start on Sunday, September 13th at 9:30 a.m. in Building A. We'll be looking for you!

Children's Church Highlites

August

Summer is almost over. School will soon start. This will be a time to meet old friends and new friends. What a great time to come to Children's Church and meet our friends in the Bible. The Bible gives us a great education too. It teaches us about families, geography, spelling, math, games. We also will visit some great places. In August we will learn about Moses and about the cruel treatment of the Israelites, the plagues, and the Israelites' escape from Egypt. Come visit us every Sunday. Look up the book of Exodus and read Chapter 1.

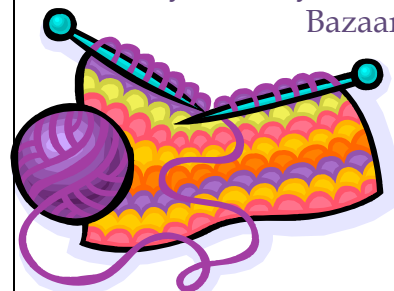


See you soon, Ms. Pat, Ms. Michelle, Ms. Iris

Grace Crafters

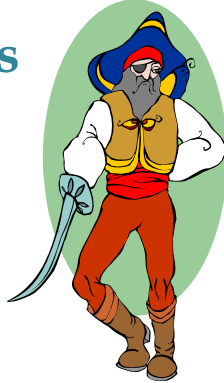
Once again we are collecting jewelry, items for our Attic Treasure tables, and crafts from our home crafters. If you would, keep our November 7th Bazaar in mind whenever you find something we could use. We would appreciate your help. Donations can be brought to the office at anytime or to our craft room Thursdays from 9:30 - 11 A.M. in Building B.

Thank you for your support. As always, our Bazaar money goes to Grace Presbyterian Women to support their mission ministry.

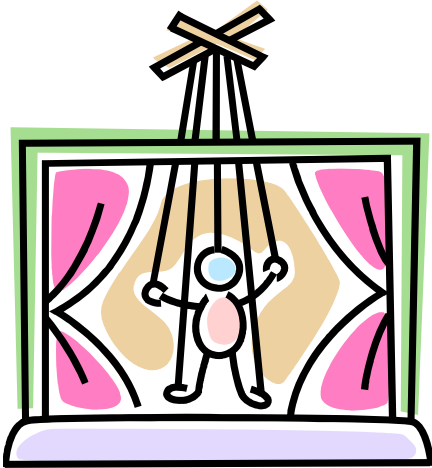


"Sallywags In Action"
 "Dreamin Caribbean"
 "Quackerjack Stew"

What do these things have in common?



They are all part of the upcoming performance of the Hands Serving Him Puppeteers!



On August 9th, the Puppeteers and their families will present the "Pirates of the I Don't Caribbean". This fun filled afternoon will include a lunch that will put you into the "Dreamin Carribean" state of mind.

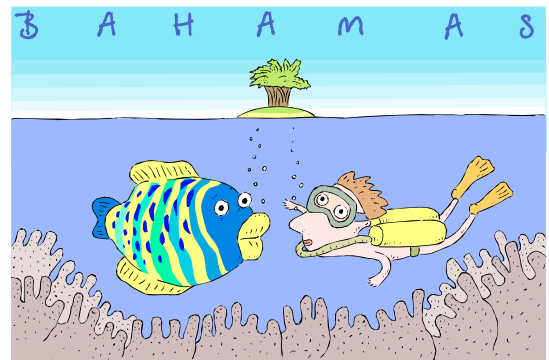
Lunch will be chicken and sides (menu to be refined soon) prepared by our resident chef, Fred Jaeger, and served by our Puppeteers and their Families. This fabulous show of music and whimsical drama about treasures on earth and what's really important will delight and enlighten your ideas of pirates and their treasures.

Our Puppeteers have been working hard on this production since April, and I'm sure that you'll find the play delightful! We have been blessed with families that have come together to share the Word of God and proceed with the "Great Commission" and make disciples of others.



We have had great fellowship time watching the production come together as the ideas for sets and props have been discussed and developed and then put on the stage. Our practices over the summer have gone from one night a week to two, and the joy we're sharing putting this together has been a blessing. We are also finding talent in places that we never would have imagined before. I hope that this is the same blessing for you as well.

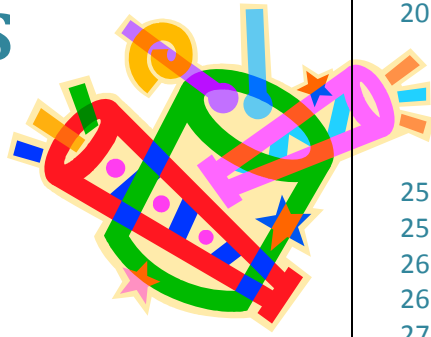
Tickets are on sale in the fellowship hall between services for \$8 each. The proceeds will be going to our mission family the Olins, as well as replacing some of our 20 year old puppets. There is limited space available, so get your tickets soon. See ya there!



BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST

- 1 – Christine Doyle
- 1 – Suzanne Jaeger
- 2 – George Dennis
- 2 – Thelma Geloneck
- 3 – Kevin Stewart
- 3 – Barbara Vogel
- 4 – John Pitt
- 4 – Adeline Shultz
- 5 – Suzanne Forman
- 5 – Bert Gordon
- 6 – Peg Prior
- 7 – Gloria Madden
- 7 – Bette Reeves
- 8 – Calvin Double
- 8 – Jerrold Witsil
- 9 – John Ross
- 9 – Charlotte Strait
- 11 – Helen Dakers
- 11 – Jordan Magrini
- 11 – Wilma Stauffer
- 12 – Terri Rodgers
- 13 – Rosalie Macdaid
- 13 – Linda Price
- 14 – Dennis Ely
- 15 – Stewart Knapp
- 17 – Jennifer Soccorso
- 20 – Jackie Boewe
- 20 – Phyllis Franklin
- 20 – Virginia Gibson



- 20 – Collette MacDonald
- 20 – Marilyn Vandervoort
- 21 – Doris Zawacke
- 23 – Judith Albanese
- 24 – Jeanette Faylor
- 25 – Ed Franklin
- 25 – Bruce Hammel
- 26 – Ronald Quatkemeyer
- 26 – Russell Rice
- 27 – LuVerne Simonson
- 28 – LuAnn Cavanagh
- 28 – Jeanne Warner
- 29 – Grace Mampel
- 29 – Tim McGrath
- 29 – Nicholas Toney
- 30 – John Romaine
- 30 – Glenda Simonson
- 31 – Cathy Hogeland
- 31 – Carolyn Vogt

SEPTEMBER

- 1 – Mike Ruth
- 2 – Murray Hagen
- 2 – Robert Jensen
- 2 – Norma Weiland
- 3 – James Hennessey
- 3 – Carolyn Hunter
- 3 – Rosemary Parker
- 5 – Kenneth Gerstner
- 5 – Michael Hackney
- 5 – Margaret Hedeon
- 5 – Vivian Waldbusser
- 6 – Pauline Fontana



2009

August

2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 Communion 8:30 Casual Service 10:45 Traditional 11 Children's Church	3	4 8 AM Yard Work 10 AM Flexercise	5 Office Closed Noon 7:00 Puppets	6 8 AM Yard Work 9:30 Grace Crafters 12:30 Holy Rollers	7	8
9 5 Cents A Meal 8:30 Casual Service 10:45 Traditional 11 Children's Church 12 Puppet Lunch/Show	10	11 8 AM Yard Work 9 AM Quilters 10 AM Flexercise	12 10 Bible Links Brunch, Fell Hall Office Closed Noon	13 8 AM Yard Work 9:30 Grace Crafters 12:30 Holy Rollers No Deacon Mtg	14	15
16 8:30 Casual 10:45 Traditional 11 Children's Church 2 Evergreen Woods	17	18 8 AM Yard Work 10 AM Flexercise (No Finance)	19 Office Closed Noon	20 8 Yard Work 9:30 Grace Crafters 12:30 Holy Rollers No Session Mtg	21	22
23 8:30 Casual Service 10:45 Traditional 11 Children's Church	24	25 8AM Yard Work 9 AM Quilters 10 AM Flexercise	26 Office Closed Noon	27 8 Yard Work 9:30 Grace Crafters 12:30 Holy Rollers	28	29
30 8:30 Casual Service 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Traditional 11 Children's Church	31					

This Month's Volunteers

Church Office Volunteers

Barbara Harrower Ginny Okopski
Hazel Sandoff Charline Lanman
Marjorie Halloran Kay Jensen
Betty Bertschinger

Financial Aides

Barbara Harrower Helen Dakers
Marjorie Halloran Roberta Jarvinen
Lois Cunningham
Ione Plis, Honorary Aide

Folding the Newsletter

Lynne Crawford Kay Jensen
Bob Harrower Betty Schielein
Hazel Sandhoff Don Sandhoff
Barb Harrower

Ushers for August

Jack Bartell Dave Martin
Bill Ambrose Rufus Hunter
Bill Gerham Jim Bielan
Tom Foster Bill Larkin
Donna Larkin

Caring For Our Sanctuary

Lois Cunningham

Greeters

8/2/09

1st Service Nancy Hammel
2nd Service Helen Dakers, Jean
Clymer

8/9/09

1st Gary & Jackie Boewe
2nd Sue Lightbody, Ann Martin

8/16/09

1st Elli & Dick Viets
2nd June Chiovitti, John Benyon

8/23/09

1st Fred & Hilde Kraut
2nd Al & Suzanne Swahn

8/30/09

1st Barb Vogel
2nd Earl & Judy Makiney

CHURCH OFFICERS 2009

SESSION

Moderator: The Reverend Chet Okopski
Clerk of Session: Dee Bodel

2009

Bill Ambrose
Dee Bodel
Betty Katke
Wayne Keister
Dean Moore
Russell Schick

Helen Dakers
Rufus Hunter
Nola Kay Knox
Cheryl Kopia
Bill Larkin
John Romaine

2010

Jack Bartell
Cheryl Carter
Lois Cunningham
Len Davis
Ken Gerstner
Paula Morton
Barbara Vogel

DEACONS

Moderator: Joyce Flint

Ralph Ambrose
Mildred Bartell
Sharon Courter
Pat Hawken
Sue Lightbody
Pat Schick
Thelma Volzer

2011

Don Halloran
Janice Johnson
Bonnie Kauffman
Ray Lanzilotta
Jerry Larson
Larry Ottos
Virginia Ritzenthaler

Linda Ausenbaugh
Jackie Boewe
Joyce Flint
Nancy Hammel
Roberta Jarvinen
Len Newkirk

The Tie That Binds
August 2009 Issue 5, Vol. 7
Published 11 Times a Year
Grace Presbyterian Church
8375 Spring Hill Drive Spring Hill, FL 34608