**Steps to Connect** is our 2-part orientation for people who are interested in exploring membership at Grace UMC. Please register for Steps to Connect at [www.steps2connect.org](http://www.steps2connect.org).

**Sunday, March 19 at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Sunday, March 26 at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Fellowship Hall**

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The harvest is bigger than you can imagine.... (Luke 10:2 CEB) These are the words of Jesus to a large group of his followers as he sent them out. He not only sent them out to spread the good news, but also urged them to pray that God would raise up more harvest workers. We are in the business of serving as instruments in God transforming the lives of others through the grace of Jesus Christ.

You have received information about **Expanding the Mission**, our capital campaign that begins March 5. The goal of the campaign is to reduce our debt. As I said in the first campaign brochure you recently received, when I was introduced as the new Senior Pastor at Grace, the fact that the congregation had stepped out in faith to relocate to this new site and building was an important sign to me. It demonstrated that Grace was more committed to the mission of transforming lives through the power of Jesus Christ than to the comfort of a familiar place. It also demonstrated a willingness to step out of your comfort zone, give sacrificially and take on some significant debt.

We have done quite well at reducing this debt, but we have always known that another campaign would be necessary. If we reach our goal of $1,000,000 to be given over the next three years, by then we should be able to manage our principal and interest payments from our ministries budget. This will enable us to focus our funding efforts for our main business - transforming lives. This campaign is not ultimately about debt or buildings. It’s about expanding our mission to transform lives.

I hope many of you have already begun to pray about this campaign – for its success, for its leaders, and for your participation through your own giving. We’re asking everyone to pray, “Lord, what do You want to do through me?”

Please make every effort to be in worship over the next five Sundays as we focus on Gratitude, Ministry, Prayer, Generosity, and Commitment.

“The harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.” (Luke 10:2 CEB)

Walking in Grace,
A Moment in Time…

There was a time when Grace held yearly church wide picnics, I came across this article in the newsletter dated Oct. 19th, 1974.

SUNDAY AT CPL PARK CHURCH PICNIC

The winners and everything else are ready for our annual church picnic and we are calling all families of the church to come this Sunday afternoon to CPL Park. Families are invited to come at 4:00pm to enjoy volley ball, ping pong, dominoes and other games, or just to relax and visit. A picnic supper will be served at 5:30 p.m. Every family is asked to bring a covered dish that can be shared, plus eating utensils. Everything else will be furnished including plates, cups, napkins, bread and drinks. The picnic will conclude before sundown with a brief vesper service of singing and worship. The musical talents of our youth will be shared in the service. The CPL Park is located on Hearne Road. Bring back some memories? Ah the good old days.

...and the grace news

Mary Lutz Historian.

January 2017

Visitors:
Druanne Cotten
Sue Havelka
Grace Jones
Renea Lange
Alice Mann
Kevin McDonald
Stormi Ross
Patsy Salazar
Claudia Secrest
Sue Wishard
Art & Carol Zeitler

New Members:
Heath & Kaylee Stone

Baptism:
Bria Stone

Average – January
Worship: 8:50 124
11:10 124
Nursery 6
Monthly Average 254
Small Groups (Sunday School):
Average: 109

Year to Date received for Ministries - $79,474.66
Year to Date Ministries - $65,984.86

14521 Northwest Blvd TMF Loan Balance January 1, 2017 - $2,165,841.47
14521 Northwest Blvd TMF Loan Balance Jan. 31st - $2,139,200.69

Playground Fund Phase 2 $10,945.22

Oak Park Walkway $24,357.27

Jan.
Food Pantry $1265.94
Methodist Children's Home $539.00
Benevolences $68.08
Children's Gifts $291.94
Donation for Sick Child $500.00
World Vision (sponsor child) $30.00

As of Jan. 31, 2017
2017 Apportionments – $87,033.00
2017 Apportionments Paid - $7,221.17
8.30%
Dear Friends,

It's a new liturgical season: Lent! After the delicious pancakes of Mardi Gras and the more reserved spirit of Ash Wednesday, we enter into the 40-day period approaching Easter. Lent is often considered a somewhat depressive season with its traditional emphasis on the human condition and our desperate need for God. But I have to be honest – Lent is one of my favorite times of year! Indeed, self-examination and repentance can be hard things, but there is such joy to be had in knowing that God's love covers all things.

Historically, the early church’s pre-Easter nightlong vigil mourning the death of Christ expanded into a 40-day period modeled on the story of Jesus’ forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness before being tempted by the adversary (check it out: Matthew 4:1-11 and Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1-13). By the 4th century CE it was church practice to use this time as a period of repentance and preparation. Just as Jesus fasted, the community of faith was called to a period of self-denial and reflection. New converts to the faith were prepared for baptism, and people who had become estranged from the faith community were afforded the opportunity to be reconciled.

Even today, many Christians “give something up” for Lent with the purpose of refocusing our attention and devotion to God. More recently, some Christians have begun adding something during Lent, like trying out a new spiritual practice or volunteering at a local mission, in order to practice working out their faith in tangible, real-life ways. As I think about what my Lenten practices will be this year, I feel called to take up a fast. However, I am reminded of the call of God through the prophet Isaiah:

*No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned: lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help (Isaiah 58:6-7)*

From my own experience, I know that it is easy to have an empty fast during Lent – to give up something easy or choose a practice that only affects myself. But what might it look like if we chose the kind of fast that is described in Isaiah – a fast that requires us to go outside of ourselves? One that that lives into the Lenten spirit of repentance and reconciliation by pursuing intentional practices that bring healing and restoration to the world? In this way, we acknowledge the brokenness of ourselves and the world, but also point towards the hope that comes in Christ Jesus.

As you prayerfully consider your own Lenten journey this year, I invite you to consider how this season of reflection and preparation can not only transform your own heart, but *through* you transform the world.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Relethai

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**EXPANDING THE MISSION**

Transforming Lives

Three ways to be involved:

- **Pray** – for the campaign leaders, for our congregation, and for your participation in this campaign to reduce our debt and expand our mission.
- **Praise** – for the way God has blessed Grace’s ministry and will bless and expand our ministries in the future.
- **Plan** – to attend worship and participate in the events during the months of March.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, March 5</td>
<td><strong>Gratitude Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 6 &amp; 7</td>
<td><strong>Advance Commitment Gatherings</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 12</td>
<td><strong>Ministry Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 19</td>
<td><strong>Prayer Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, March 26</td>
<td><strong>Generosity &amp; Sacrifice Sunday</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, April 2</td>
<td><strong>Commitment Sunday &amp; Celebration Event</strong></td>
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<td>Sunday, April 30</td>
<td><strong>Announcement Sunday</strong></td>
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Dear Grace UMC Family,

UP Rising: The Master Storyteller

Jesus was the ultimate storyteller. He probably was that guy everyone wanted at a party because in minutes, he could have the whole crowd focused on his every word. His stories had purpose, and he connected with his audience intentionally. Jesus used parables—a story with a purpose—to show listeners how God cared for them and interacted with their lives. Join us as we start a new series, "The Master Storyteller," and look at some of these parables in depth and discuss how they relate to our lives today.

OutBreak: Sunday afternoons 12:15 – 3:15 (lunch is included)

This is our weekly time to get together and do BIG things. Two afternoons a month are spent serving through mission projects, one afternoon is split… Middle School Madness and Senior High Skillz, and one afternoon is focused on a study. Currently, our study is entitled One Month to Live—living a no regret life.

WNL: 6:00 – 8:00 Strength in Numbers Series

Who are the people you enjoy hanging out with most? Your friends, right? They laugh at your jokes, reply to your Snap chats, invite you to the movies, and hang out with you, even when you smell bad or show off your terrible dance moves. And whether you have a huge group of friends or just one BFF, they can have a huge impact on who you are now and who you become later. Our group can sway us toward good decisions…or bad ones. There’s a lot of influence in who we hang out with, including our friends and people we look to for guidance. And there can be a lot of pain when a friendship ends.

Perhaps that’s why the Bible has so much to say about these topics. As we look to the Bible for advice, we’ll discover how we should choose our friends and mentors, and how we should handle those friendships that fade over time.

Blessings on your Journey,
Victoria Low