

# GRACE NOTES

News from and about Grace Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan # 12 November, 2008

## An Update ABOUT LIVING WATERS MINISTRY AND THE BUCKLEY HOUSE

Over the last 2 years Grace Church and Living Water Ministries have been in a partnership, the goal of which was to reach women in the Southgate community. (Our Church's community) To encourage our outreach into Southgate, the Vander Weide Foundation purchased the house at 118 Buckley, paid for renovations to it, and donated it to Grace Church. The Vander Weide's goal was to provide opportunity for developing ministries to the Southgate neighborhood. The Foundation has also been a significant funding source for Living Water.

Grace Church entered into an agreement with Living Water for the use of the house and we jointly developed plans for the house. Bear Manor Properties owned by Jackson and Barry Van Dyke (both members of our church) remodeled the house as requested and restored much of the house's original beauty. Women of diverse backgrounds, situations and challenges have lived and attended meetings at the house now called "The Buckley House". Tuesday evenings became the night for large group meetings called, 'Women at the Well'. Spiritual care, fellowship, teaching and a light supper were provided to the women and their children. We were very excited about the ministry that Living Water has developed.

Earlier this year, Living Water made a decision to move its offices and center of operation out of the Southgate Community. They occupied office space donated to them on 44<sup>th</sup> St. This move from our neighborhood was of concern to us and to the Foundation.

The lease agreement between Living Water and Grace for the Buckley House was intended to give Living Water the space in the Buckley House at the lowest possible cost – simply carrying expenses such as taxes, insurance and utilities. The plan agreed to by Living Water was that Living Water would use the first floor as offices and rent rooms in the second floor apartment to women who were in need of safe shelter. Money generated by the rents paid to Living Water would then cover the expenses of the house. It was difficult to obtain renters who were able to pay the needed rent. Living Water also found that some of the women did not follow the rules for safety and there was damage to the front door and some other parts of the house which they repaired and paid for. Living Water attempted to find a live-in supervisor to maintain safety and security at the house. After advertising, no one was found to take on this position. This problem together with other concerns proved difficult for Living Water.

Living Water was unable to meet the expenses. It became clear to both parties that the Buckley House arrangement would not work unless funds were available

to pay for expenses. Grace did not have a budget for the expenses of the house as we assumed that Living Water would be able to pay them. Several meetings took place with Living Water, the Administrative Council, and full Council and with the Foundation. In October, the Grace Church Council determined that it was best to conclude our partnership and arrangement with Living Water as to the Buckley House.

The Council strongly desired to continue our relationship with Living Water Ministries and was fully prepared to make space available again in the church building, which was our arrangement prior to the occupancy of the Buckley House. However, the Board of Living Water determined to end the partnering arrangement and moved their ministry fully into their space near 44<sup>th</sup> Street and Kalamazoo.

We feel that these developments are unfortunate and we would have liked a different outcome. We will as a church continue to support Living Water with prayers for their work in their new location. We are also committed to continue to use the Buckley House for ministry to the Southgate community.

We want to thank Karl Westerhoff who served as liaison for Grace to Living Waters and also Mildred Pinder, Mark VandenBerge, and Greg Yoder who represented Grace Church on the Living Water Board during this difficult time. John Kooreman, Doug and James Haverkamp and others worked and painted in the house. The Building Committee provided landscaping and other improvements to the property. There are many others who have also worked at the house, I am sure. We would like to thank all of them for their faithfulness and hard work for Grace Church.

*Mary Flikkema, on behalf of Council*

## Katie Kok's Story



We started our adoption process to get Katie in 2005. We have a beautiful niece who was adopted from China, and we started talking about doing that for our family as well. So Carol and I went to a Bethany informational meeting, and started doing the paperwork. Everything went well, but then China started slowing its adoption process down significantly. We had hoped to have a daughter already in late 2006 but that was not to be the case. '06 and '07 came and went, and we started worrying that China would stop its adoption process altogether. There may be many reasons for the slowdown, but



the one that struck me as the most important is that many Chinese families are now prosperous enough to support many of these orphans themselves. In fact, Katie's Chinese foster family ended up adopting Katie's foster sister. Many families can also afford to pay the government "penalty" that is imposed for having more than one child.

We finally got the call from Bethany on a Friday afternoon in March of this year.

We had a daughter, Fu Na Ying, assigned to us. All of the orphan girls in the City of Fuzhou are given the surname of Fu, so "Na Ying" is her Chinese first name. We needed to get ready to travel!

We left Grand Rapids on June 11. We traveled with 4 other adoptive parents (from throughout the country), and we spent the entire time with them. We first stopped in Beijing for 3 days, mainly to get adjusted to the time change, but also to sightsee. It would have been very hard to pick up a traumatized baby without adjusting to the time change—we were quite wiped out by the trip. On Monday, June 16, we flew to Nanchang, the capital city of Katie's province. We checked into our rooms, and were told to meet in the conference room at 3:30 to get our girls! We all put on our nice clothes and got out our cameras and arrived plenty early. Right at 3:30, in walked 5 orphanage workers carrying 5 unhappy little girls. We couldn't tell which one was ours right away. But they were all cute.

They sorted us out, gave us our girls, left, and the girls all started screaming and the parents started crying. We quickly signed some preliminary papers and went our



separate ways to try to calm them. Carol and I took Katie for a walk around the block—that did the trick for her. For the next 10 days we alternated between pa-

perwork assignments with the government, sightseeing, and sitting around with our new girls. It was all very enjoyable and pretty adventurous—got to see markets with scorpions/snakes and other strange things to us; beautiful scenery and people; and vast differences in economic situations. There was no shortage of Mercedes and big screen plasma TVs for sale, but also laborers carrying huge stacks of cardboard on their backs and eating noodles in little shops.

We have now been with Katie for 4 months and it seems like forever. It has been nice watching her become

very bonded with Carol, and then extending that bond to the rest of us and now becoming very comfortable with new people as well. That is a huge contrast to the first week we had with her—she was clearly frightened by everything and very traumatized by the removal from her foster family. That was hard to watch, because we believe from pictures we have that she had been happy with her foster family. We really thank Grace Church for all of the support and prayers through this process and look forward to Katie having great brothers and sisters at Grace! *Andy Kok*

## Goals for Grace Church:

### COUNCIL, VISION COMMITTEE SEEK CONGREGATION'S IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the sermon today, (11-16-08) Pastor Jack mentioned the work of our Vision Committee. This committee has built on the work of two Council retreats, one last November and one last June. Mike Bruinooge led the Council in those meetings and has continued on to help bring those beginning ideas into a Vision for Grace Church. Other members of the vision committee are Pastor Jack, Paul Ippel, Karl Westerhoff, Meredith Post Treman and Roger Wagenmaker.

As Council members, we want to be certain that all Grace Church members are able to give input, provide feedback and assist Council members to refine our thoughts about the direction we as a congregation wish to go. At the retreat Council, members were asked about the strengths of our church. What do we feel builds on our history; what are the good things about Grace Church? It was a day long discussion but we were able to see some commonalities in what the group identified as strengths.



We determined that our first priority is **EDUCATION**, especially for our youth, but also for Adults and seniors as well. We want to grow in the knowledge and grace

of our Lord and Savior. **OUTREACH** was the second area we identified as important to our church and to our community. Many thoughts and ideas were brought forward, with many more to come. **FELLOWSHIP** was also a major focus that the group identified. What are the needs of members for support and to feel connected, particularly for those who are new to our church? **WORSHIPPING/CELEBRATING** is a great part of who we are as a congregation. What brings us closer to God and Christ in worship? What brings us joy as a congregation of believers? The Council discussed ways to get congregational input.

We plan to have some **POTLUCK LUNCHES** after services (fellowship and food always bring us joy!). Council members will be at different tables where members can mix and mingle, ask questions about the above topics and share their ideas about strategies to implement these ideas. Council will refine those ideas and bring them back to the congregation for approval. If you cannot wait for a potluck lunch, contact your elder or member of the vision committee and let them know about your thoughts. More information will be coming soon. Start looking for those potluck recipes now. *Mary Flikkema, on behalf of Council*