

# GRACE NOTES

News from and about Grace Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

# 17

June 2009

## A LETTER TO MY DAD

On Tuesday, June 16, Pastor Jack's dad, John Kooreman entered the hospital for an aorta valve replacement. They opened his chest for surgery but were unable to do the valve replacement due to calcification around the heart and valve. At this point, there is nothing further that can be done for him. Please keep him and his wife and family in your prayers. Pastor Jack wrote a "Father's Day" letter to his dad.

Father's Day - June 21, 2009

Dear Dad,

I realized that I very rarely (if ever) write to you. You have been so faithful in writing to me and to so many others, providing encouragement and inspiration. Please forgive me for not being more faithful in my encouraging of you. I love you so very much. I am sorry that I did not tell you that often enough.

I don't know if I have ever felt as sad as I have this week. We are all now facing the thought that you will not be with us forever. Of course, we already knew that was true, but today there is a new power and reality to it. I can only imagine how sad and disappointed you must be. I pray that God will be so real to you now and that you will experience joy in his presence and power in his grace and love for you. I pray that you continue to be an example to us of a godly man, trusting in his Savior.

I just wanted you to know how much you mean to me. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." As children transition from childhood into adulthood, we honor our fathers in our tribute and in care, rather than in obedience. I want to say what is on my heart today as a tribute to you because I cannot be a significant part of the care that my sisters and brother will be for you and for mom in the months ahead.

One of the hardest decisions of my life was the decision to leave NJ with my family. I know that my move to Michigan caused you pain. You had your whole family together with you. I took that blessing away from you. I feel badly about that. I grieved the personal losses that I experienced as a result of that move. I might have acted most of the time as if it was not a big deal but it was. The biggest part of the loss for me was losing my day to day conversations with you and with mom and becoming disconnected from my brother and my sisters. You taught us the importance of family. You told us often about the covenant and said, "God works through families."

That is true for me. I want you to know that I am a Christian because of you and because of the example you have been to me. You have always been very honest about your faith. Looking back on my life, I don't

have a testimony that begins with me in the gutter and from which I was saved. I honestly don't recall a time in my life in which I felt I was not a Christian. I always believed in Jesus. That reality can only be explained by the witness to the reality of God that you and mom have been to us. I think you taught us in words and by example that there is a great God in heaven who knows us and loves us, and that we are to love him and live for him.

I saw you take some very hard knocks and come back strong, unmoved and not shaken. I remember of course the difficult health issues, including the TIAs and blindness. I remember financial hardships. I remember the restaurant struggling through a recession in the 70s and you losing out on significant money that was a part of your sale of Franklee Reality. You trusted God. I think you showed us that God was in control and that he makes things turn out for good. I don't always like this verse. It is very hard to use when people are suffering. It sounds too spiritual and not caring enough but you showed us that you really believed that "God works all things together for good for those who love him and are called according to his purpose." I will always be thankful that I saw the truth of that verse lived out in your life. You showed us that God can be trusted.

I loved how you were fun to be around and how you loved life. You have enjoyed an amazing life. You seemed to be very happy and joyful, most of the time. You did some incredibly funny things in your life. I hope you can look back on them and laugh, even today. Your friendship with Jerry Williams must have been a blast. It is good to have some crazy friends. You had many many friends that you deeply connected with and who have remained your friends throughout your entire life.

That is amazing. I wish that I could say the same about myself. I think of the plaque in Grandma's kitchen on Rae Ave. I remember it from my childhood. "Only one life t'will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." I think that the truth of that was seen in your life. Although you were a lot of fun, you never failed to witness to your faith and took very seriously the responsibility we

have to lead people to Christ. I think you are a gifted evangelist. You certainly could have been a preacher. (No doubt better than I.) When we all get to heaven, you will be thanked by more people than you would ever have dared believe. Your influence in this life is vast.

I loved how you were willing to challenge the status quo in Midland Park church. Your faith was not about Christianity as a negative religion. It was not about, "You don't do this and you can't do that. You don't go here and you can't go there." You lived out the much more positive



Three generations of Kooremans; John, John, and Jack

message that we are doers of the word and not just hearers. You believed in the spiritual realm and in the supernatural. You believed in the new birth. These were not the norm at Midland Park CRC. You did not see being a Christian as just a decision or something that we were just born into. You saw it as the work of the Holy Spirit and saw living it as a lifelong pursuit.

You believed in prayer. I still am amazed at the discipline in your own devotional life. We prayed together at every meal as a family. You were a student of scripture. The Bible was important to you. You lived it and taught it, to your family and to everyone else. Because of the spiritual and devotional life that you lived, you were tied into a reality of God that I don't yet enjoy. Your life was hid in Christ. You truly believe that nothing



is impossible, but with God all things are possible. You are an example to us of that reality.

Your relationship with your wife is a little more complicated, isn't it? We know this: You loved her and took care of her. You did not allow anything bad to be said about her. You taught us the debt that we have to our mother. You emphasized over and over that no one loves me like she does. You know that is true for yourself as well. She loves you. No one loves like she does. She gave her life and her heart to you forever. You gave yours to her. What else need be said? I thank God for your Christ centered life together.

You have lived out the life that God called you to live. It

was an adventure. It was an exciting life. It was an authentic Christian life. You were who God made you to be and not somebody else.

If the truth is that the time of your departure is near, I know that you can say that you have fought the good fight and completed your race. You have kept the faith. The victor's crown of righteousness is waiting for you. You will hear the Lord Jesus say, "Well done."

I love you dad! Thank you for everything you have been to me. With love and admiration, your first born son (the birthright kid),

Dear God, I thank you heavenly Father for my earthly father. What a legacy he has left to me and my children and to his grandchildren. I pray that you will help me live as he taught me. Thank you for the privilege and blessing of being his son. Be close to him now. May he know your presence as never before. In Jesus Christ. Amen.

## BECOMING MORE SPIRITUAL

"I thought a spiritual director would put me on a fast track to being more spiritual," said one participant after a year of direction, "but really it has made me realize that walking with God can be restful and safe, and I learned how to listen to God."

Spiritual direction is a process of meeting once a month (or more often) with a trained person who helps you develop practices of walking more closely with God. "Direction" is really not the best word since

directors these days are more like companions than like trainers. Your director may invite you to try some new ways of listening to God or some new practices of prayer, but these suggestions are always invitations, not demands. The idea is to have a companion on your journey toward knowing and trusting God more fully.

Directors can also help with specific problems that involve your sense of what God is calling you to do, your concerns about stewardship or about family problems. Directors are not psychologists or marriage counselors, but they can sometimes help you sort out what issues you really need to pursue with professional help.

Karen DeVos was trained in a two-year program at the Dominican Center here in Grand Rapids. She graduated in 1998 and has been



doing direction regularly ever since. She would be happy to meet with you to discover whether you are interested in direction, and if you are, what kind of director you might like. Some people want only male, or only female, or only someone they don't know socially, or only a clergy person, or only a lay person, or whatever. Karen can help you find whatever you think would be best for you.

All directors are willing to meet with a person at least once or twice to discover whether there is a good "fit" between the director and the participant. No offense is

taken if the participant decides he/she wants to try someone else.

I've worked with a director and the experience helped me to develop a deeper contemplative spiritual life.

Give it a try. You have nothing to lose and you might gain the means of travelling more peacefully, more joyfully, more thankfully toward a closer walk with God.

Pastor Jack Kooreman



## CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES



Congratulations to all who have completed their course of study. Below are the people who have completed various special programs: Courtney Coleman Rachael Spears and Derrick VanderLaan from Potters House; Olivia Crow completed her studies at Grand Rapids Christian High School, Mitch Hausmann from Coopersville High School; Markeda Gray from Ottawa High School. Shauntae Gray graduated from Grand Rapids Community College. Andrea Owens received her degree from Cornerstone University and Maria Bosch received hers from Calvin College. Sarah Schreiber completed her studies at Calvin Theological Seminary. May the Lord lead you to your next destination and bless you and keep you.