

GRACE NOTES

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

14

March 2009

From the Council-

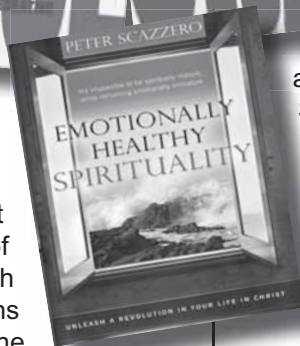


Grace Breaks Through!

Grace Church council has been working on several projects in the last several months. You are likely aware of the Grace Breaks Through Document which outlined a refined vision statement with plans for how to implement the plan and use the gifts that God has given us as a community.

The Council has identified several individuals to provide leadership in the key area of implementation: Our Children and Youth, Fellowship, Worship, and Outreach. Currently those individuals are being contacted and asked to lead in the above areas.

The Administrative Committee is working on the development of guidelines for the Buckley House project. Five or Six young people will be living as a group in the house. This group is very diverse and will be spending time in retreat to know one another, their gifts and how they will plan to live together as a small community within the larger Community of Grace. The house is nearly ready with a target move in date of March 1 if all goes as planned. We need to thank several young men from AD who have been working with Bill Flikkema to clean, paint, wax and prepare the house for the residents. We should give special thanks to Harry Lew, Katie Timmermans and Pastor Jack for interviewing and doing extensive planning for how to assist these young people as they develop their plans for ministry. The candidates are 'fired up' and some have education in doing urban ministry. We look forward to giving all of the new Grace members a warm welcome and commissioning them during a service that is being planned for mid March. The deacons have identified this as a means of outreach to our community and will be working closely with the young people as they begin at Grace.



Over 90 people have joined our study of the book, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Rev. Pete Scazzero. It is clearly a good time to contemplate and reflect with one another about our own spiritual life and hear about journeys of our fellow members. The classes start on time and end on time. We watch a brief portion of a DVD prior to each lesson. Pastor Scazzero gives an introduction and the participants go through questions in the workbook prepared ahead of time. The whole process is anchored in the sermon that Pastor Jack prepares for that week based on the topic and scripture to be discussed. There is still plenty of room for more participants if you would like to join a group. See Paul Ippel, Council Secretary for more information and a group time that fits your schedule. We would like to thank Paul for his commitment to organizing this project, providing study materials and making sure there are refreshments available. Many thanks to those who provide refreshments.

Council members continue to look at ways to implement the Vision we have for Grace Church. Soon the Nominating Committee may be contacting you to be a Council member. Please consider becoming a leader in the plans for "Grace to Break Through."

Mary Flikkema, President of Council



"Ain't Nobody Done Nuthin for Me."

On Friday and Saturday on March 6 and 7 at 7:00 PM at Grace CRC there was a Black History Month production of "Ain't Nobody Done Nuthin for Me." This drama was written, produced, and directed by Deborah Alexander, a member of the Lighthouse Full Life Center.



On the left Bailiff Kathy Bouwsma and Judge Melanie Karr. Bottom, Helen Brent and Edith McCreary.

The drama was set in a courtroom and starred Mr. Davis who was on trial because he was ignorant of his past. He feels that nobody ever did anything for him, thus the title. "Aint' Nobody Done Nuthin for Me."



During the trial there were many witnesses from the past including King Alfonso I, Queen of Sheba, and Rev. Robert Walsh. Mr. Davis also witnessed scenes from slavery times and heard from Sojourner Truth, Dr. Martin Luther King, and others. He learned about his past and found out that there were many who have done something for him.

There were about 35 people in the cast. Emmanuel Phillips played the part of the prosecutor, Melanie Karr was the judge, Kathy Bouwsma was the bailiff, Helen Brent was Harriet Tubman, Al Pinder was the attorney, and Nikki Pinder was Queen of Shebah. Leah Yoder was in charge of set and props. There were dancers from Grace Church, GEMS, Grace Gospel Choir members, members from the Lighthouse Full Life Center, and the greater Grand Rapids community.

Christmas at Parnall

A Letter from David Kwiatkowski

David Kwiatkowski has been a dear friend of the Bouwsma Family from his teenage years. He has been a member of Grace Church for the past 6 years.

Season's Greetings from Parnall. The day starts like any other day. Nothing special. Nothing new. It was freezing rain last night so the whole compound is coated with a thin layer of ice. It looks like the glazing of a doughnut on the bricks and wire. The sidewalk is icy so I walk carefully down to main street and on to the mess hall. Today's fare is grits and toast with a side of powdered eggs—same as we had on Tuesday, I think. I sure miss bacon and eggs.

I finish my meal and head back to my unit to await the opening of the yard. The sun is just coming, and the ice on the compound takes on a yellow orange glow—kind of pretty in a harsh sort of way. I make it back to the unit, make a cup of coffee, then go to the Day Room to do my Bible study—today in Second Corinthians 8, Micah 5, and Matthew 2—all suggested reading from the Daily Bread. As

A Review by Mrs. Baker.

There was a good start from the GEMS girls who sang "Yes Lord Yes", with courage and willingness.

A dishonest example of the courts, injustice has a bad influence on our young people, especially black men; but there are a few fair judges and lawyers in the system to help if we want to strive for it.

Ethiopians were people of great wealth who submit to their rulers, queens and kings.

Looking back in the Old Testament I Kings 10:1-13; Queen of Sheba had courage and was not afraid to put it into action; she approached King Solomon in person to learn knowledge and wisdom and to share it with her people. We should do the same.

Despite the hardship of slavery, men, women and children who survived left a worthy example for us to follow (never too late).

Dare not forget that many Caucasians were against slavery and brutality, they were beaten and tortured. Some even gave their lives for our freedom.

In conclusion, someone has always been there to help us. As we continue our struggles let's be challenged to remember, not by the color of our skin, but by the content of our character. "We shall overcome" "Yes we can!" God's grace never gives up on us.

I sit in the Day Room, other inmates are about their business making deals and telling stories of a life that once was. I find keeping to myself is a good thing to do. I really do not want to know these people. Do your own time, I say. Do not get involved with these people.

After Bible study I go back to my bunk and sleep for a while. It's now about 6:45 am. I wake up about 9:30, and then go outside for a while. The sun is out and has made short work of the ice that coated everything. Now everything has that sinister look about it—the razor wire on top of the fence, the guard tower that looks like a lighthouse, then on to the cell blocks. Down the way a few men are about. All seems to be quiet. I find a bench to sit on and watch the world go by for a while. All is well until the P.A. blares saying the yard is closed. Where did the day go? It is now 10:30 am—time for count.

I lie on my bunk and take another nap—not that I need the sleep. It takes up time in my day, and time is all I have relevant to myself—time to think, time to remember, time to plan, and time to day dream. I am awakened by the bustling of the men. Apparently we are up next for chow. I get dressed and await the P.A., then make my way down main street. The sun is out and very bright. The sidewalk and main street are all slush now.

Today is Christmas, and the cooks have come up with mashed potatoes and gravy, roast beef (two thin slices), broccoli, jello salad, and apple pie. I wish I could have more, but it is against the rules. Seems I'm always hungry here. They do not feed us very well. Today is the very best they can do. After lunch I sit down to write this letter, then take a nap. The rest of the day is like any other day—more of the same. I miss my life outside of this environment.

I close my eyes and sleep until 6pm—time to go to the mess hall for more of the same old stuff. So ends Christmas Day at Parnall*.

**Parnall is a correctional facility in Jackson, Michigan*