

• GRACE • insider

making disciples



FIRST DAY OF
REOPENING
GRACE

I WANT TO BE A

pastor

WHEN I GROW UP

I AM 52
YEARS OLD

I CAN

make the best
cheesecake

THIS SUMMER
I AM GOING TO...

ride my bike

DATE 7 / 12 / 20

Reopening Grace
starts on pg. 2

/july

A NOTE FROM PASTOR PAUL



Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
-Romans 12:9-13

Some things are so much more difficult to put into practice than how we imagine it. "How hard can it be?" Some things are just a lot harder than we thought! I remember the first time I took my kids skiing. The youngest had no fear, and quickly saw results. Those that were old enough to realize they could meet Jesus rather easily were more reasonably cautious. However with careful persistence and many years later—none of us are still that great! We are better than we were, but not the best that we could be.

Showing honor in the body of Christ is a lot like that. It's a lot harder than it seems, and even after faithful practice, it takes a while. So God faithfully sends us "opportunities" to make good on those desires we say we have. We are certainly in the midst of one such opportunity in reopening the church after a global pandemic. We will soon have the wonderful opportunity to meet together in person as a congregation. Along with that opportunity come some challenges.

While we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we have varying convictions in the right way to physically navigate the process ahead. Some of us are cautious; some of us are not. Most of the individuals I have spoken with on both sides of the issue can provide a sound, reasonable, and even godly rationale to their preferred approach. What do we do when fellow Christians disagree on such things? While there are other important passages to consider on this subject, one thing that is very clear here is that in all times we need to "outdo one another in showing honor."

Practically, what does that mean? Earlier this week I was sharing a beloved verse found in Paul's letter to the Philippians with some other friends. In describing his young protege Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote, "I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare." I would submit that for us to truly understand how to show honor, we need to be a lot more like Timothy. We need to take a genuine look at the welfare, needs, and preferences of one another. For those of us who have no concerns about masks or social distancing, what might I need to keep in mind about the person that does? For those who are very concerned that a mask and social distancing is essential, the same question applies to them.

Practically speaking, one way we are trying to love the body of Christ and outdo one another in showing honor is by offering three different service options from the North Liberty Campus. The first service is at 8 AM starting July 12, and is for those who want to wear a mask. This service is mask mandatory. The second service is at 10 AM, and is mask optional. The online service is also at 10 AM and is available via our website or on our YouTube channel. As a practical way to show respect and honor, we are asking everyone to attend the service that best addresses their shared concerns and convictions. The Downtown service will be held at Old Brick at 5 PM, and will be appropriately socially distanced with masks being optional. As we have already shared, we are also encouraging community groups to meet together in homes to ensure the church can continue to move forward.

After hearing from the congregation (see charts on the next two pages), staff, medical professionals, and the collective leadership, we are planning to reopen Grace Community. In this challenging season, let's love well and seek to outdo one another in showing honor!

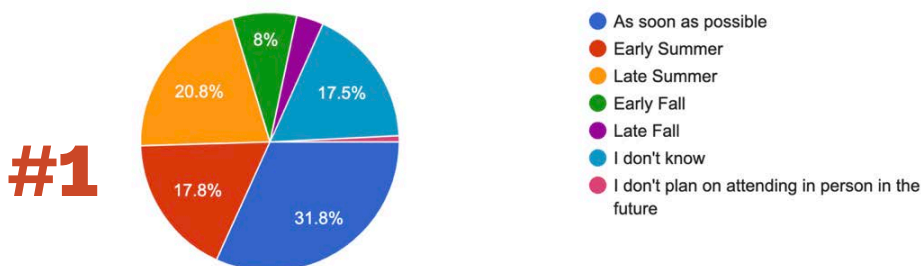
PAUL HANSEN
Executive Pastor

CONGREGATION SURVEY WE HEARD YOU!

*May 2020 survey data compilation as explained by Chelsy Reed,
User Experience Communication Designer*

Based on what you know today, when is the soonest you would consider attending Sunday services in person?

771 responses



In May we sent out survey via email for everyone in the congregation to participate in, and over 750 of you did. Thank you! We now provide a summary of the data so that you can know where everyone else is at when it comes to regathering and reopening our campuses.

Pie chart #1 shows a wide range of comfort levels regarding attending an in-person service. That's a lot of colors! If you go back to preschool and imagine mixing red and yellow into orange, then think of that.

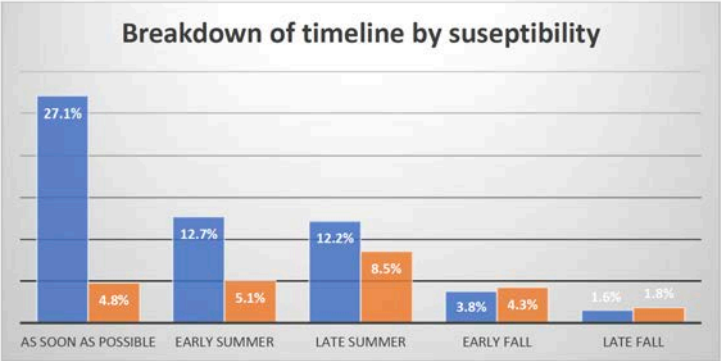
On the chart above you'll notice that there are basically three major groups. The "right now" dark blue group, the "sometime this summer" orange group and the "maybe sometime closer to 2021" group.

In a staff meeting recently, Pastor Paul urged

The graphic below breaks out each column above into Yes/No responses to “household with a known COVID-19 risk factor,” (No in blue; Yes in orange).

For example, 31.9% of respondents in the above graphic replied ASAP, of which 27.1% of the total congregation answered NO and 4.8% answered YES to, “does someone in your household have a risk factor for COVID-19?”

#2



us to consider our position, then consider the person with basically an opposite opinion to ours. Remember that before and after COVID-19 we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we need to love beyond the pie chart boundaries. This issue (as with so many others) has a great potential to divide the church, give Satan a foothold and the chance to do as he does: steal, kill and destroy. At Grace the plan is to stand together against the real enemy and together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Someday that will be everyone together again without the social distancing. Someday that will be in glory with every tribe, tongue, and nation, but at the moment it looks different.


Chart #2 shows that folks with risk factors (orange) and those without (blue) are fairly evenly spread across time. Notice that you don't see all the high-risk folks piled at one end. We value meeting together as a community; we miss this regardless of our COVID-19 positions.



TO REOPEN AND HOW TO REOPEN

THAT IS THE QUESTION

It's tricky stuff, figuring out how to love our congregation and our neighbors as it pertains to reopening the church campuses and when and how. To get the Insider perspective we interviewed Pastor Brooks Simpson and here's what he had to say about the process.

A photograph of a playground with blue and orange equipment. Yellow caution tape with the word "CAUTION" is strung across the scene. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

Q: How did you feel or what was going through your head when COVID-19 started impacting the state of Iowa?

A: Honestly, I had a selfish first response. We'd just returned from a week of vacation and it was right before the NCAA wrestling tournament. I just really didn't want them to cancel the tournament. Of course, they did. After that everything snowballed, especially once the virus hit the community spread stage. I was concerned, not afraid of getting it, but about how it would impact our

we preached on Daniel in the fall of 2016, we had already considered the times and assumed that there would come a time when preaching God's word would become quite difficult. We just thought that it would be due to politics shutting down open worship, not a global pandemic. We are also very grateful that our community groups are so strong and vibrant; they have really provided so much support for one another in the church, the staff, and our greater community during this time.

“ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ”

congregation and community. The duration of the impact and the multiple avenues of uncertainty created such a whirlwind of questions, doubt, and opportunities for chaos. To be honest, I wasn't worried about the church continuing on because of the reality we've been preaching on for nearly two years that's found in Matthew 16:18. It says, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I wasn't concerned that Grace Community Church would fall apart under the weight of a global pandemic, because of what God says in Matthew, but what I was concerned about was how we would care and connect with God's people during this time. If you think back to the sermon series

Q: So Brooks, who has been working on responding to COVID-19 and planning for an eventual reopening of Grace?

A: Well we have two teams. The COVID-19 Task Force has been spearheaded by Ryan McFadden, our Facilities Director. This team has medical professionals from within our body who have been advising us on many data points. From this task force, we've been taking our queues on when and in what context it's safe to reopen.

Then we have the Re-Entry Team. This team is made up of staff and is responsible for complying with the guidelines that the COVID-19 Task Force has set. They will be responsible for thinking through, reconfiguring, and preparing the campuses for

reopened worship services. They will work through things like facilities, the parking lot, the entry points to our campuses, and children's ministry classes. It's a big job.

Q: What have been the priorities of Grace elders and staff, the COVID-19 Task Force, and the Re-Entry Team through this season?

A: Our first priority was to trust God—we will not be shaken. Our nation is on a fast pace track meet pursuing personal gratification, but this is an opportunity to repent and follow Christ over pursuing selfish desires. We will worship God no matter the difficulty, context, and circumstances.

Our second stated priority was (these were set at the beginning of May as we considered what it would take to reopen our church campuses) to listen and use the talents that God has given

in these times. Right now, going to the grocery store provides a similar result as past experiences, meaning you get your groceries. However, it is exhausting with many distractions and impediments.

We will resume in-person services when they can be safe for the most people while offering the least distractions to worship and still practicing the "one anothers."

This means that federal, state, and local guidelines are not the only ones [laws] that we need to follow. The law of love, (Gal. 5:6) and doing things in a "fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40), will serve as our guidelines too.

Q: How will we serve folks who have to or choose to remain in the online congregation after the campuses officially reopen?

“ Federal, state, and local guidelines are not the only ones [laws] that we need to follow. The law of love (Gal.5:6) and doing things in a “fitting and orderly way” (1 Cor. 14:40), will serve as our guidelines too. ”

us. God has given us medical and public servants in our local body; we are going to listen to and utilize their skills.

Our third stated priority was to care for each other in love. There are various views on coronavirus. We are going to have different views on how to move forward in our body ranging from cautious to confident views informing individual's actions and people who are in between the two. How are we loving and caring for those in our church body with different views? Love for those around us should guide our actions, thoughts, and words during this time.

Finally, our fourth stated priority was to resume services when we can create a safe and worshipful environment for the most people. As usual, we want people to feel welcome and safe in our building. This takes extra consideration

A: We have a team working on an online engagement strategy. The engagement and connections that we've had even during the oppression of the virus have been astounding. We don't want to drop back to the "same old" because we've improved our online game during the COVID-19 crisis. For example, in June, we had 15 people attend the Baptism Class online and 9 are moving forward to share their stories and get baptized in either the summer or the fall. That's 3-4 times more people than we normally have at a Baptism class. That's a win under fire. As for the finer details of what this looks like, we'll keep you posted. We're all having to be flexible as we figure out how to move into the future together.

Q: Okay, so when will Grace reopen?

A: We have already started a phased

approach to reopening. This began back in June when we provided our group leaders with guidelines about meeting again in their small groups. Having our community groups begin to approach meeting again in person was effectively phase one. In phase two we plan to reopen our campuses on a more limited basis with annoying, yet necessary precautions taken to mitigate potential for virus spread.

We are asking that community groups meet in homes for the first month and do church together during our online service to make the needed space on campuses for folks who aren't in that immediate community or who are higher risk attenders. RSVP will be available as we get closer. While the mechanics are still being worked out, it needs to be stressed that your participation and response in the process will help us succeed in the reopening process. Our first Sunday scheduled to be back on campuses is July 12.

Phase two of reopening looks like this for the North Liberty Campus: There will be a service at 8 AM geared towards our high-risk folks and people that would prefer an environment where everyone wears a mask. This service will be mask mandatory. There will also be a service at 10 AM (note service time change here) where masks will be optional. The livestream of the service will also be during the 10 AM time slot for folks who are remaining in the online congregation for the time being.

The time change is for cleaning purposes. There will be thorough sanitation of the facilities between services. If you are healthy and would like to be part of the cleaning team, contact Ryan McFadden at

ryanm@graceb3.org.

Downtown our normal service time will resume at 5 PM, masks will be optional, and we will make it possible for all to socially distance. As we move forward with live services, we will have music with limited congregation participation. No congregational singing initially, but there will be music from the stage.

Through August there will be no Children's Ministry classes whatsoever on both campuses. We've yet to determine a course for our kids' classes after August, but we will keep you posted when we know more. Thrive classes will also look different in the fall of 2020. We will have Biblical Soul Care as our only in-person class. We will, however, still have the Baptism Class and the New Believers Class online, and maybe a couple more; we're still working those details out.

Q: What has been the biggest silver lining to these crazy times? Where has COVID-19 forced us to grow as a church?

A: Before March 13 it was much easier to be lulled into believing

that passive participants in "church" resembled real success in the church. Even online we can see what folks call "vanity metrics" of how many viewers you have on your YouTube sermons and videos. But those views aren't the equivalent of productive ministry.

In the thrashing wake of COVID-19, we are looking at real engagement with the movement that is happening at Grace. It's not enough to have a butt in a seat. Being the hands and feet of Jesus takes a real movement. That's why we're working with The Unstuck Group to restructure from the inside out at Grace. We want disciples made, and we want to see it in the stories and in the numbers. It's really opened our eyes and jolted us forward to the next step of being a movement, not a monument. It's helped us clarify what a "win" is at Grace. It's honing us.

***“ We want to see
disciples made and we
want to see it in the
stories and the numbers.
It's [COVID-19] really
opened our eyes. ”***

A photograph of a light-colored brick wall with four vertical stripes of paint in orange, teal, green, and light blue. Handwritten in black cursive script across the center is the phrase "make people feel loved today".

make
people
feel
loved
today

INSIDE OF **TREASURE AT GRACE**

*For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
How blessed is he who considers the helpless;
The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble.
-Psalm 41:1*

"Thank you, Grace Community Church, for giving so generously of your time and talents. Together we raised a total of \$50,437. Simply AMAZING. We have already given \$20,000 to local non-profits that are meeting the basic needs of those impacted by COVID-19 and will be donating an additional \$5,000 shortly.

We were able to support Shelter House which is helping those without a home shelter in place while doing their best to keep everyone safe. IC Compassion, one of the four food banks we were able to support, saw the number of families they serve double in one week and quadruple by the end of the month of May. Your generosity covered the cost to feed those additional families for the next couple of months so the team at IC Compassion could focus on what they do best, feeding refugee families impacted by COVID-19.

What I love about Grace is we don't just give with our finances; we give with our whole selves. Many people from Grace have blessed both international students and their neighbors delivering groceries, making meals, and

dropping off care packages. I echo the words from one of the non-profits we supported "Praise God for the body of Christ.""

- Wade Summers,
Outreach Coordinator

In April, we raised \$44,700 for benevolence in our community. Of that amount we've already sent out the following to local food banks and centers:

"I saw the generous donation you all made. That blew me away. Thank you so much. We are so grateful for your contribution- and when this is over we would love to come and say thank you sometime. Praise God for the body of Christ!"

- IC Compassion worker

\$4,000 - Shelter House
\$5,000 - North Liberty Community Pantry
\$5,000 - IC Compassion
\$4,000 - CommUnity (CommUnity is formerly the Crisis Center.)
\$2,500 - Coralville Community Food Pantry

We haven't allocated a whole lot beyond that because benevolence giving has far outweighed the opportunities we've been presented.

Additional gifts, totaling \$5,800, were mailed to the church as people continued to watch and listen to our services from April. We thank all of you for your generosity! This overflow shows the world that Christ's bride is not sleeping until His return! Because of your generosity, we have more than enough to meet the specific benevolence needs that we've been given the opportunity to meet at this time.

- Caleb Stamp,
Business Administration Director

BY AIMEE MARINO

PLANT YOUR FEET

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." -Matthew 7:24

I saw a post on social media comparing this year to the fictional board game and films *Jumanji*. Playing this game results in disaster after disaster coming to fruition in real life. The post jokingly commanded that "Whoever started this game in January, please end it... NOW." Cleverness and joking aside, it does feel like our world, country, community, and individual lives continue to be pummeled with trials and suffering. In the time between when this article is being written and when you are reading it, there may be new events to mourn, frightening circumstances, or new developments. Some create an opportunity for much-needed change and give us a chance to act for the things God cares about: justice, mercy, and so many other things that are close to His heart. Some trials are a matter of simply weathering the storm well. Regardless of our circumstances, we are called and empowered to walk in faith. When we walk in faith, we are empowered to love and serve others well, to walk in unity, to act on the things God's heart cares for, and to show our world the face of Jesus in the way we love one another. He is our Rock, and we must ensure that our feet are firmly set on the one who is steady and sure.

Here are some ways we can "plant our feet" today*:

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1. Manage Our Focus (Ps. 119:15; Pro. 4:23; Isa. 26:3) Am I focusing on Jesus and His word today? Have I spent more time in news/social media, or in enjoying Him and His creation today in prayer, worship, thankfulness, etc.?

2. Mine God's Character (Col. 1:19-20; Heb. 6:17-20) What does God

*paraphrased from "Anchoring Our Soul During a Storm," by Garret Higbee

say about Himself in Scripture? He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and His character and attributes are an endless gold mine. Which attribute can I “dig” into and focus on today to understand Him more?

3. Meditate on God's Promises

(Ps. 1:1-2; 119:148; 2 Pet. 1:3-4) The truth of God's promises surpasses our circumstances, feelings, doubts, and uncertainties. We can trust them fully because



they are an extension of the God who is the embodiment of trustworthiness. How would your day change if you fully believed even one of these promises?

4. Monitor Our Self-Talk

(Ps. 13; 42; 62; 130; Lam. 3; Luke 12:19-21; Phil. 4:8) What story am I repeating to myself today? Each

of us has an internal soundtrack of our thoughts that impacts the way we make sense of the world. It includes the counsel we give ourselves (good or bad), the lies we believe, and/or the truth we hold onto. Is your internal story today one of victory in Christ, or defeat and fear?

5. Measure Our Words

(Ps. 19:14; Pro. 23:12; Matt. 12:36-37; Acts 15:24) Are the words I'm speaking today those that build up or tear down? Are the words I'm listening to voices of truth, wisdom, and compassion?... Or fear, foolishness, and self-centeredness? Words have incredible power, and we are called to use them wisely.

Would actively practicing even one of these things today change the words you speak? ...what you post on social media? ...whom you choose to serve?

Let us be humble before one another in the face of trial. When it is so easy to focus in on what divides us, let's choose instead to unite under the redeeming blood of Christ that covers us more completely than our opinions, preferences, and differences. Brothers and sisters, in the midst of adversity, the Christ-follower is given promises and opportunities available to no one else. What a gift! The Christ-follower has a chance to shine His light into darkness, to proclaim hope into the void, and to show just what it looks like for a love greater than anything else on earth to unite and empower a diverse group of people in ways the world simply cannot ignore or dismiss.

As we lean into adversity today, let's ensure that we are doing so with our feet firmly planted on the Rock that is the Cornerstone, our solid ground and firm foundation, our never-changing, always present God.



A QUESTION OF **REPENTANCE**

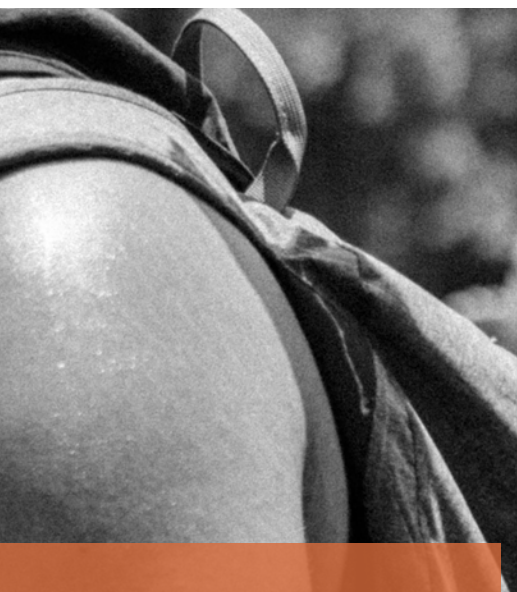
*to repent and of what to repent,
that is the question*

BY PASTOR BROOKS SIMPSON

*If we confess our sins, he is
faithful and just to forgive
us our sins and to cleanse us
from all unrighteousness. If
we say we have not sinned,
we make him a liar, and his
word is not in us.
- 1 John 1:9-10*

If you are a follower of Jesus, you repent. Repentance is part of how you and I first became a Christian. The Holy Spirit convicts you concerning the nature of your sin, your lack of righteousness and shows you the grace that comes through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. You repented, believed, and by grace, through faith, you were saved. This is what Paul calls being justified in Christ by faith in Romans 3:23-26.

Repentance is also a part of our daily walk as Christians. We don't repent just once when we come to Jesus. We repent continually as we walk with Jesus. John states that if we aren't seeing and turning from sin regularly, then we are in fact liars. Strong words. Generally, this idea of repentance is not something the world believes or endorses wholesale. Until now...



George Floyd's death has united all people under one banner. Everyone is calling for repentance.

Re•pent (v.): to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the repairing and righting of one's life.

No one is silent on the matter of repentance. No one. Everyone is demanding repentance. This could almost be construed as a spiritual breakthrough on a national level. Repentance is a prerequisite for revival and everyone is calling for it, but is it revival? Not yet. Everyone is calling for *someone else* to repent. Generally, the calls to repentance are along tribal lines.* Each tribe is calling on the

other tribes to repent.

I hesitate to write the list of things I hear people calling others to repent of because I know in doing so each of you will be offended, but here are some of the calls for repentance coming from various tribes to other tribes:

- The police need to repent of the use of unjust force.
- The protesters need to repent of violence and property destruction.
- Those who choose not to protest need to repent of their silence.
- The liberals need to repent of calling everything racism.
- The conservatives need to repent of denying racism.
- White churches need to repent of not speaking out on racism.
- White churches that do speak out on racism need to repent and get back to doctrine.
- Black churches need to repent of not calling their communities to personal responsibility.
- Black churches calling their communities to personal responsibility need to repent of not attacking a racialized system.
- Whites need to repent of their white privilege.
- Blacks need to repent of perpetuating



Note that I wrote tribal and not racial. A tribe is the people you identify with culturally. A tribe is defined by values, religion, worldview, and often skin color. A tribe is united around culture.

a culture of victimization. Offended? If not it is because you are either sleeping, or the Spirit is moving powerfully within you to crush the tribalism that is so ingrained in every one of us.

What should those who profess to love and follow Jesus turn from in this racially charged movement in history?

I must start not with what *other tribes* should repent of; I need to look back, look within and look up.

Look Back - History matters. Our past does not define us, but understanding the past helps us understand the mess we are in today. This has been true in all marriage counseling I have done, including the counseling that Stacy and I went through personally. If there is a problem today, you cannot ignore the events that came before the problem.

As we assess what to repent of, let's take a look at how we got here in terms of race relations in this country. It will be helpful if you have listened to the four-part sermon series that we did titled "The Root of Racism."

America is suffering for the sins of our fathers. In Exodus 20:4-6 the iniquity of the fathers refers to the sins of our ancestors (See also ch. 34:7; Num. 14:18; [Ps. 79:8; 109:14; Isa. 65:6, 7; Jer. 32:18]). God is letting His people know that while you will be judged for your own sin (see Deuteronomy 24:16) and not the sins of your parents, the consequences of your parents' and grandparents'

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.
- Matthew 7:3-5



HD/2--Hartford, Conn., Apr. 15--GOING AND COMING--Mrs. Russe toward camera with son between pickets in front of Noah W today after she was turned down in attempt to enroll led because they live outside its lines. Another parent, right school. Negro mothers said they objected to own neighbor on grounds of de facto segregation.--AP Wirephoto url 41



listen to the series

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."
- Exodus 20:4-6

idolatry will in fact be felt and endured by you and your children.

This is harder for Westerners to process because we view everything through the lens of individuality. If I do what's right, I will be rewarded. If I do what's wrong, I will be punished. Westerners think that if someone else in my tribe, ancestor (past) or peer (present) screws up, that's on them and it's not my problem. Wrong. It's your problem. It does not mean you are culpable for their sin but you are impacted and suffer the consequences of their sin.

Two examples from the Bible are Joshua and Daniel. In Joshua 7 we see the account of the sin of Achan. Here is the story of one guy who disobeyed God and hid treasure in his tent. Then Israel went out and got thrashed in battle. Joshua complained and God responded.

Joshua rooted out the sin in the camp. He did not protest his individual innocence. Why? Because he knew that his

relationship with this covenant God was connected to the collective even in his personal innocence.

In Daniel 9:4-8 we see, after 400 years of warning after warning for the Jews to repent from idolatry, that the Jews were dragged off into exile in Babylon for 70 years. A young righteous teenager named Daniel was among the captives. He was castrated and made a type of high-level slave. At the end of the 70 years as an old man he prayed one of the greatest prayers of repentance in the Bible.

“The Lord said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.”
-Joshua 7:10-12

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What's troubling is Daniel's choice of pronouns. He included himself in the prayer as if he committed the sins his fathers committed. <

His ancestors turned from God but Daniel was faithful. He understood that the idolatry of one generation brings suffering to the generations to follow. He saw himself as part of a collective and as such he did not separate himself from their corporate consequences. This is very hard for Americans to swallow.

Our History

The idolatry of our fathers.

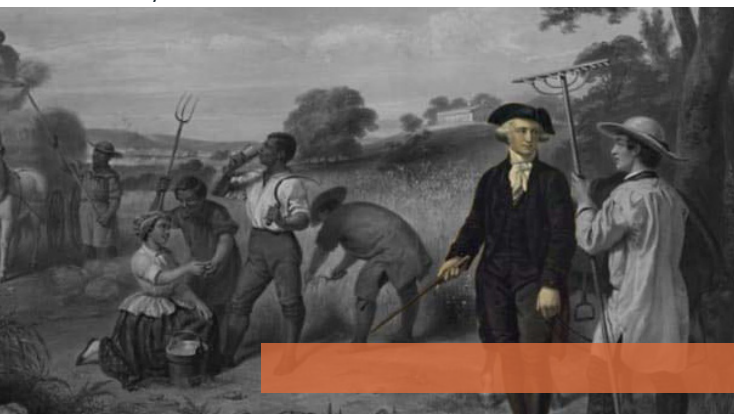
1st Generation: Slavery as Public Policy (1619-1863)

The idol was economic prosperity. As great as our nation is, no one can deny that our founders consciously chose to allow slavery to endure as our nation began. *George Washington owned over 100 slaves and said that he detested the system, but couldn't devise a way to stay afloat financially without them, so he urged future generations to abolish slavery, literally passing the problem to the next generation. It took civil war, a national bloodletting to officially abolish institutional evil.

"I prayed to the Lord my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. **We** have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to **our** kings, **our** princes, and **our** fathers, and to all the people of the land. To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to **us** open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To **us**, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you."**

- Daniel 9:4-8

bold text added



* from "Washington, A Life" by Ron Chernow

2nd Generation: Segregation as Public Policy (1865-1965)

Simply abolishing slavery as trade did not change the hearts of a nation. It simply made slavery punishable by law. Our nation traded slavery as public policy for segregation.

South: Jim Crow (1856-1965)

In the South, laws were enforced that kept blacks from voting, education, employment, etc... "Separate but equal" was anything but equal.

North: Economic Fencing (redlining until 1968)

Blacks migrated north after the Civil War to escape Jim Crow and were met with a less overt form of separation. Blacks were funneled into the inner city slums and then, through redlining, banks would not give loans to residents in at-risk neighborhoods. Redlining was a process by which banks and other institutions refused to offer mortgages or offered worse rates to customers in certain neighborhoods based on their racial and ethnic composition. This is one of the clearest examples of institutionalized racism in the history of the United States. Although the practice was formally outlawed in 1968 with the passage of the Fair Housing Act, it continues in various forms to this day.

The sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the 3rd and 4th generation. If you believe you are not responsible for the sins of the people before you, you are correct. I was born in 1967 and I am not guilty of the sins of my white ancestors. While I bear no guilt for the transgression of my ancestors, I have to live with the consequences of their sin and like young King Josiah,

I am responsible for ripping down the idols they left behind. But we object! That was so long ago. But was it really? My parents were married when it was still law for older black women to give up her seat on a bus when a white man wanted it. That is not ancient history.

Yes, laws have been changed and it is "illegal" for people to discriminate on the basis of skin color, but no law passed by man can change the heart of a culture that is suspicious and distrustful of any tribe that differs from their own.

Look Within - Jesus says take the log out of your own eye first. Here's why He has to say this- no one does it. In fact, the average person believes that if two people disagree and they admit one side is wrong that it somehow means the other side isn't wrong. There is a common fallacy that admission of wrong absolves other parties of their wrong, but it doesn't. We deal with our sin first. That does not mean the other parties or tribes don't have to deal with theirs, but we are first responsible for ourselves, not to badger others into admitting their sin.

So what do we repent of if we cannot repent of sins we did not commit as individuals? Sin is repenting of: actions, words, attitudes, and beliefs that do not align with following Christ. Do what Daniel did and repent of corporate sins. Acknowledge that the sins of our fathers have made this mess. We can acknowledge that 400 years of state-sponsored oppression only made illegal within my lifetime has given us a culture where there's no trust between whites and blacks.

We can repent of western naivete that thinks the consequences of the sin ends when the offender dies rather than realizing that sin is generational in consequence.

We can repent of pride. We can repent of the pride that would lead a 52-year-old white man like me to compare himself to a 25-year-old black man and think, "I have succeeded in life because I have worked hard and used my God-given talents to the best of my abilities while that young black man is in his inner-city squalor suffers due to his laziness, lawlessness, and disregard for the sanctity of human life." I repent.

We can repent of ignoring the fact that an entire segment of our population starts on a different rung on the ladder than I did. If those of you who are white are triggered right now because you hear me telling you to repent of white privilege, you are wrong. I will not repent of being white; nor should you. I will not repent of having two parents who loved me and poured their lives into me, instilling in me a belief that I could achieve whatever I put my mind to achieve; nor should you. I will not repent of growing up in a middle-class home where I never went hungry, nor should you. I will not repent of having opportunities for education others did not; nor should you. You should only repent of privilege if you gained that privilege by stepping on the backs of another, like Washington.

We can repent of apathy. We can look into the eyes of people different from us and weep with them when they lose their children, regardless of the reason why. We can repent of failing to see that the advantages we have, regardless of their origin

are not merely for our benefit but also for others. When God told Abraham he would be blessed, God told him the reason was so that through Abraham the nations might be blessed.

We can repent of tribalism. This may or may not be racism. Tribalism is a form of identity idolatry in which I derive my significance and worth from being a part of a certain group. There is nothing wrong with being proud of your group, but when that group is what makes you who you are, then your identity isn't centered on God, which is sin for a believer. When this swap occurs, and then the group or members of it are sinning, you'll be forced to minimize, deny, or justify that sin. You see this play out most obviously in politics. Lying is an outrage when leaders of the other tribes lie, but when your tribal leaders lie, it's just not as big of a deal, a smaller lie.

Look Up - Yes, look back and acknowledge the sins of our forefathers, sins that you didn't commit. Yes, look within and acknowledge that the current attitudes you and others have about people different from you are not formed in the sinless vacuum of cultural isolation. Yes, look inward and acknowledge your own sin. Call it sin and turn from it, all of it. But let me assure you that if you only look back into the past and within to your own sin you will not change. We will not change. If looking back and



within is all you do, at best you walk with your head down, ashamed of the sins of the past and ashamed of the sin that's in your heart.

Looking only back and inward, you will live always in shame as slaves to your indwelling sin and the generational sin of those long dead.

Look up! Look to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of your faith. Look up! Look to Jesus who although

He knew no sin became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God. He was not like Daniel in that he merely acknowledged and identified with the sins of his forefathers; Jesus took the sins of

His ancestors upon Himself and all those who call on the name of the Lord our God. No, He was not guilty of our sin, but He bore it to the cross in our place (Romans 5:5-21 and 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Look up! Look to Jesus who has reconciled us to Himself and made us part of His tribe. Look to Jesus and know you are now defined not by the color of your skin, your nationality, your gender, your age, your politics, your net worth, your success, or your failures. You bear the image of Jesus Christ. You are a new creation in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Look to Jesus and live!
Look to Jesus and love!

"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

- Hebrews 12:2

"who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

-Philippians 2:6-8

"remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

- Ephesians 2:12-16



FIELD STAFF UPDATES



JAPAN

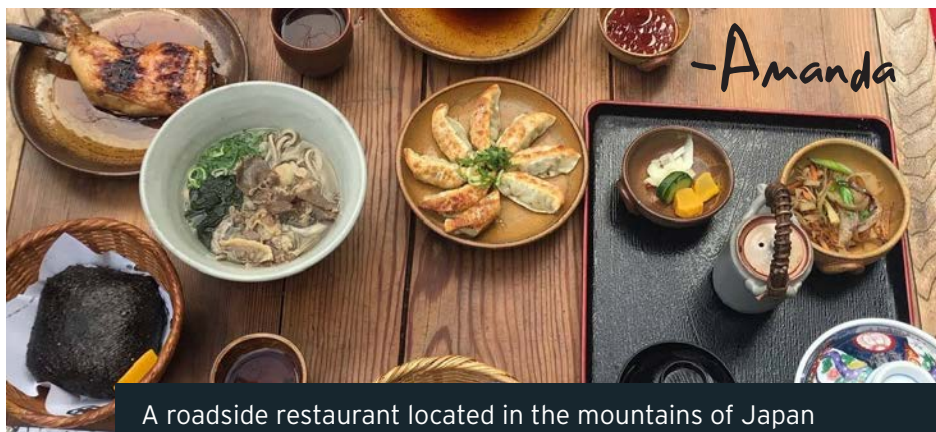
NEW FIELD STAFFER AMANDA ALBERTSEN

"In early January, I (Amanda) went to Japan to interview with four field teams. Three of these teams live in Fukuoka, Japan while the other team lives in Hiroshima, Japan. My time in Japan was spent getting to know these teams and visiting a few tourist spots such as: A-Bomb site, Kintai-Kyo Bridge, and Ohori Park. I also had an opportunity to meet a Japanese pastor, who at one time visited the EFree Church in Ames, Iowa. How neat is that!!!

Upon returning to the States, it was recommended that of all the teams I could join that it is best for me to join the Launch team. This team is specifically designed to be a language and culture team. Meaning that for two years my primary responsibility would be to study Japanese language and culture. Upon completing these two years and depending upon my acquisition in Japanese, I would then look to join one of the other long-term teams.

I am continuing to take steps of faith as I move forward with going to Japan. Currently I am expected to leave for the field early October of 2021. Even though a year seems like a long time, I have a few items that will take close to that amount of time to finish. One of those items is rebuilding a team of supporters, prayerful and financial. Considering that we are still very much in a pandemic, I will be looking for tech-assisted or social distanced ways to meet with folks who are interested in becoming part of my team.

This month I am praising God because He has given me margin to rest and granted me peace with the unknowns. God has also started to provide opportunities for building new relationships. My prayer requests are that God would help me find new mentor(s) to fulfill the role asked by my sending church, also that God to raise up people who will partner with me in taking the gospel to Japan."



A roadside restaurant located in the mountains of Japan



Joyce celebrating an Indonesian holiday with us during language school



INDONESIA

ALEX & TRICIA LUDVICK

"This is a hard note to write. So many are experiencing much grief, pain, and anxiety recently, so I don't mean to add to the list or undermine other circumstances. Times like these hopefully drive us to the Lord in prayer, as true peace and relief from all our troubles come from Him.

Our dear friend and co-worker here in Papua, Joyce Lin, died in an airplane accident mid-May. After a distress call, her airplane crashed into Lake Sentani shortly after takeoff. She was not carrying any passengers. The airplane has since been recovered from the lake, and an investigation is underway. There is still lots of uncertainty as to what caused the accident, but what we do know is that she is home with her Savior and the impact of her life was enormous. All over the globe came songs of lament, and stories of praise to the life Joyce had. We were fortunate to know her these past two years and her life made a unique impact on us. Pray for her family, and our Papua MAF family following this tragedy.

Please also be in prayer over the operating certificate that allows us to fly here in Indonesia. As of last week, the government did not renew it, so we are currently grounded. If all the meetings this week go well, we will be ready to fly again hopefully next week, and God willing flying passengers again when COVID restrictions lighten up."

Grace and Peace,
Team Ludvick

P.S.- As of June 14 all of the documents Alex and Trish's organization submitted were accepted and they are no longer grounded! As one of the team leaders said, "Yes — we were faithful to do our part...but it is not us, the victory and joy belongs to our Lord!"



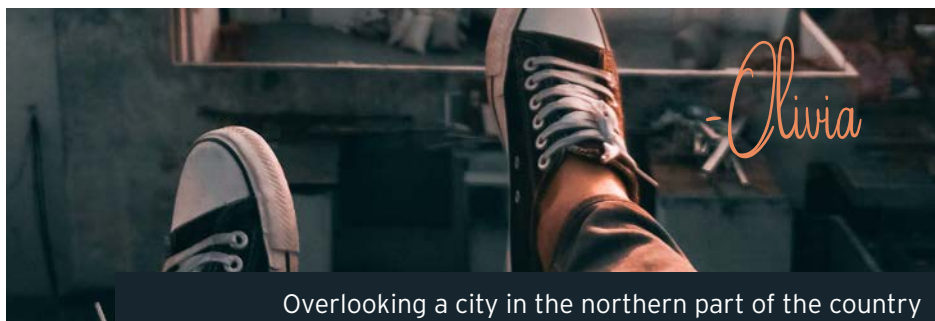
OLIVIA MERRIWEATHER

"Like for many of you, this past month has been a hard one, filled with grief, loss, and the weight of the unknown. And while these kinds of seasons are painful, they can also produce growth and provide unique opportunities to speak to the heart in ways that otherwise we might not be as open to.

In mid-May, I lost a dear local friend, mentor, and teacher to cancer. She had been sick for some time, but her body gave way to the sickness and she passed away during the lockdown. My heart broke when I heard the news. This is someone that had provided me a safe place to learn and ask questions. We had many conversations that were not yet finished. Because of the timing, her family was not able to go through the cultural practices of a funeral (normally lasting 12 days), and has been unable to find closure to their grief because of it. I have not been able to physically visit them either and it has been hard to know how to love and care for them well from a distance at this time. One way has been sharing scripture with her teenage daughter through text. While I can't be with her, the Spirit can, and sending scripture is one way that I can aid in the work of the Spirit to bring hope and peace to a grieving family.

My business partner has also lost much hope to carry on in life and work, wondering if it is futile at this point. Everywhere he turns, there is another crisis that he feels is his responsibility to manage. He's exhausted, weary, hopeless, and angry with the life he has been dealt. Over the last few weeks, we have had many conversations about where hope comes from, how hope in earthly things and people will always inevitably disappoint, and how there is a God who wants to and can carry our burdens and provide hope for the future. He is a critical thinker and works things over and over in his head. My prayer is that the Truth of what we have been discussing is one of the things that gets mulled over repeatedly and that the Spirit would water the seeds that have been planted.

May this season be one where we ALL turn our hearts toward the giver of hope and the source of comfort and peace. No where else will we find a more sure foundation and unwavering source of hope."



Overlooking a city in the northern part of the country



Celebrating Jamie's 8th birthday



SOUTH AFRICA

JOHN & LORNA ABRAHAMSE

"Hi folks,

We hope you are keeping well and safe! Our Lead team has done a survey to assess what the church's response has been to COVID-19. They are now working on how to best respond and assist over and above the new training of small groups. Please pray for wisdom for them.

We have had to retrench most of our Camp Eden staff. Please pray for them during this time and that the Lord provides for all their needs. Tough times. As you know (or could have guessed), we had to postpone this year's trip to Israel. We have dates for next year April - please pray that the Lord gives us wisdom for the way forward.

Thank you for your encouragement and support to us and J-Life as a whole. We are still on the farm. Please continue to pray over the sale of the farm. We should have clarity by the end of August from the buyer who is keen. It looks as if we will be here till the end of June, with Nate and Jamie due to go back to school early July.

We celebrated Jamie's 8th birthday on June 15 and his cousin's 7th birthday!! They had such a wonderful day!! We are hoping to head home in late June, giving Nate and Jamie some time to settle at home before school is scheduled to start for them.

Our prayers for safety and wise ways forward go out to you."

Lorna

AN INTERVIEW WITH CINDY SULWER



Q: Who is Cindy Sulwer?

A: I'm Cindy Sulwer, the Children's Ministry Director at Grace. The Children's Ministry team partners with parents to help disciple the next generation. I have the privilege of working with a fantastic staff team and volunteers, and together we use every opportunity to point kids to our heavenly father.

Q: What's something people may not know about you?

A: I have been so blessed to be married to Kevin for 25 years. We have three kids, Kyle (20), Megan (17), and Carly (16). I love to create fun activities and lessons to show children how awesome Christ is and how worthy God is to follow. People might have known that though. Also, in the email I sent to Chelsy for these interview questions I said I wasn't a good writer, but Chelsy and I worked on a workbook a couple of years ago that is on the Grace resource shelf. (Cindy might be more humble about it, but she's actually very good at what she does. Also, you can find the parent-kid workbook, "Hand in Hand" on our resource shelves when we get back into the church building.)

Q: What have you been thinking about lately? Like projects, teams you're on, big plans you're cooking, whatever has you passionate.

A: Lately, my heart has been on a few



verses. The first is Matthew 22:36-39. It says, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

And also the verse in Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Because of these verses, I know we are called to a life of surrender to Christ. All of our planning that we do for the Children's Ministry is to live this out and show others how to do the same with Christ as our strength. We genuinely desire that every family knows their need for Jesus and shares the good news with others. It is because of the hope

found in scripture that we can look forward to the hope found within the pandemic, and the hope of meeting in ways that are informed by medical professionals during the pandemic. We've worked hard on Backyard Bible Club In a Box this year, and continue to hope that we'll all meet again, and it will be sweeter than the last time we met.

I cannot wait to get back to seeing people at church and worshipping together. I also enjoy walking along with and helping other parents in this amazing journey of parenting. I know God places so many opportunities to see Him in the mundane moments of life.

FEATURING THE TALENTS OF... **DIANE MEYERHOLZ**

by chelsy reed



I used to look up from my desk at the Grace office and smile everytime I saw Diane come in. She was normally on some quest to serve and needed to pick up resources or information, but we got to see her a lot. She especially racked up the frequent flyer miles around May and June when she was preparing to host Backyard Bible Club. Diane served as a reminder that Christ's bride, the church, was at work, all around me, not just in our staff team, but in the Grace community.

Diane and Steve have been married for nearly 41 years. Diane's mom actually babysat Steve before they started attending school, and they basically grew up together. "My family moved from the same small town we lived in when I was a junior in high school but we got together again during college and married after college."

They have a son T.J., a construction engineer for the Ryan Company in Des Moines. His wife, Megan, who stays home from teaching after having twins, Josiah and Luke (8) and James (4). They also have a daughter, Jill, a special ed teacher at the Ames Junior High and her husband, Travis, a aerospace engineer professor at Iowa State University. They have Jacklyn (4) and Harrison (2). They're still huge Hawkeye

fans, but like Iowa State a bit too since T.J., Megan, and Travis are all graduates of Iowa State.

Diane and Steve have been coming to Grace for about 15 years and they became members in 2018 after assuming they were members for quite some time. (All churches seem to do that membership thing differently don't they?) They found Grace when they moved in on the same street. Diane says, "After moving to a development off of Dubuque Street Grace was an option very close to home and we began to be 'filled' with God's word like

mothers with small kids. She also likes working in the yard, volunteering, sewing, cooking, crafts, walking, and reading non-fiction. She says, "'boredom' is never in my vocabulary."

At Grace you might see her soon again behind the welcome desk, talking with members of the community group that she and Steve lead together or one of the moms she's mentoring. And every summer she hosts a Backyard Bible in downtown Iowa City at a trailer court.



never before. Each week we were excited to get back to hear more. We learned early on to get involved in a small group in order to meet folks in a church this size. The Bible teaching kept drawing us back each week."

Diane worked at the University of Iowa for 35 years as a nurse before retiring. She's probably busier now than she was then though because she enjoys spending time with the five grandkids and mentoring young

To get in on Backyard Bible Club In a Box or for more information, contact Cindy Sulwer or Natasha Miller.

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