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Walter Scott, Sexton

www.graceistheplace.org



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

February 2020

AMOS 5: 24

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

PEACE AND JUSTICE – OUR CALLING

There are few people in our world who are able to sleep without some difficulty, who are not moved by one atrocity or another, and tempted by and screamed at every day by commercials, despots, sellers of this or that, anonymous calls, and shakedowns. “Let me tell you about how a wonderful reverse mortgage works”, signage offering to us a favor by cashing checks, bring us happiness, all prepared to tempt and to draw us in. Then there are the hackers, and the crooks, those preying on anyone, particularly the most vulnerable. Wealth disparity is poisonous, unleashing wealth has crippled our political system and given ultimate control and power to a very few. This is our world today.

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From the Lutheran Study bible we know that Amos “told one of his opponents that he was not a prophet but a farmer who raised sheep and tended fig trees. Though he may not have been part of a prophetic guild that served the king, he speaks in the language of a prophet. His arguments are among the most well-constructed of all the prophets, and his elegant use of the Hebrew language is rivaled only by the psalmists.”

Amos cried out for justice. He makes clear God's concern for justice. Whatever we may do as church has no meaning, unless we treat others with justice and righteousness. The front signage on our church has a big banner calling for “Peace and Justice.” It is an old banner, one that has been up on and off and now remains up throughout the year. Just as we pray that our world may come to its senses, and try in a myriad of ways to impact it, the things that Amos spoke of are alive and well at this time, forget the eighth century B.C.E. I received an Email this morning from a member who is crying out... why? Where is God? If God is in control, why are these things continuing to happen?

(continued on page 4)

PASTOR’S MESSAGE... BEING CALLED!

After Jesus began his public ministry by preaching, “repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near”, he immediately began to gather disciples around him, companions on his journey of faith who later formed the church. Jesus told Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew, and James and his brother John: “Come, follow me.” They immediately left their nets, their boat, their father, and followed Jesus. Discipleship is just that: hearing God’s call and obeying it – even if it means radical changes of direction in our lives.

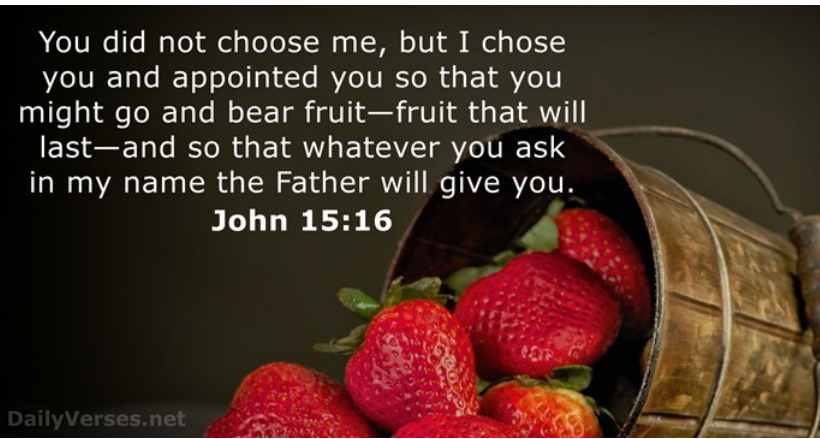
With humility and not just a little bit of shame, I have felt God’s call twice in my life. Both times I obeyed. My life changed in each case, in fact, radically in both. The first led me to face a crisis of my own creation, and the second led me to where I am now.

Churches, I suggest, may hear God’s call, too. Our members aging, still supporting and coming to Grace have heard that call in this place many years ago. Newer members have heard it, too.

Our call as church is important, and so, too, our response. Yet I posit that the real power of discipleship is our being called by God. We don’t simply decide we are going to do church here, in this place. Those who formed Grace were called to do so. They could have gone elsewhere, they could have maintained their predecessor pastors, but they didn’t. Why? While I have no prescient ability to judge the past, present, or future, I have known people who have been at Grace for their whole lives. Bernie Biederman is one example, and as he now rests with the all the saints and is at peace, he remembered his church, its mission in the world and left virtually everything he had to Grace. Those who came later, and the children of the founders all were called to remain and continue God’s mission here.

Many of us have been called to be here. It is God calling us, not our seeking him. The power of our call forms our lives. Yes, I did make a 180 degree turn in a life that was full of everything most people might want. The thing is that it was not at all expected, it came out of the blue and it stuck in me and with me. After hearing the call, I shared it with Judy. She clearly understood what a seismic change this would mean for us. Not unlike those brothers who dropped their fishing nets and walked away, she grasped it, supported it in an instant - no wondering, no let’s take another look at this... it was full speed ahead. and, here we are some 18 years later.

In other times in our lives together we made other decisions, trying to get divine guidance and seeking it out. A danger in the church today is the tendency for us to define our mission and



then invite Jesus to tag along with us. Christian discipleship does not begin by our seeking out Jesus and calling him to participate in what we are doing. Discipleship has to do with Jesus’ call on our lives and our response. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said “discipleship is not an offer (humans) make to Christ. It is only (God’s) call which creates the situation.”

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PASTOR’S MESSAGE... BEING CALLED!

(continued from page 2)

God is close in. At times we can almost feel his breath, hear his voice and feel his touch. Let us take in the light of Christ, and the newness that he brings. We may walk with him, trusting in where we will go. When he says follow, we leave all else behind. We put our hand in his and go where he goes. If and when we do, we end up in places we never imagined being, doing things we never imagined ourselves doing, and sharing life, fellowship, service and worship with people that bring us new life.

If anything comes in the way of our calls to follow Jesus, we are to leave it behind. our careers – read vocations, material possessions and the like. Our careers are to function in the service of God’s mission. if they are in any way embodying the powers of the kingdoms of the world that promote oppression, greed or brokenness, we are called to repent and reorient them so they reflect and embody salvation, justice and wholeness – the realities of the kingdom of heaven that are breaking forth in our lives and in our world.

The calling of the disciples is the beginning of the formation of the church – the community of men, women and children “called out” to be agents of God’s mission in the world. The church is not an end in itself, but rather a means through which God works to fulfill divine purposes in the world.

That’s what Grace looks like to me; we are not done, though, we are carrying our individual calls in the context of a loving community. There is always a hand at Grace to hold you, a prayer for you and yours, arms that are stretched out to the communities we serve, voices that sing with sound reverberating throughout our sanctuary... grab a hand and hold on, this is a place for the called. Who knows what will happen next? The Holy Spirit is with us, in the waters of baptism and in the meal every Sunday we may know and trust that we are not alone.

We, every one of us, is a child of God. Let’s continue to take His lead and follow Him.

Amen.

Find the error in this issue of Grace Notes and you will be mentioned in the next issue as a Grace Sherlock Holmes!

THE MAMETS – OUR DEAR MAMETS

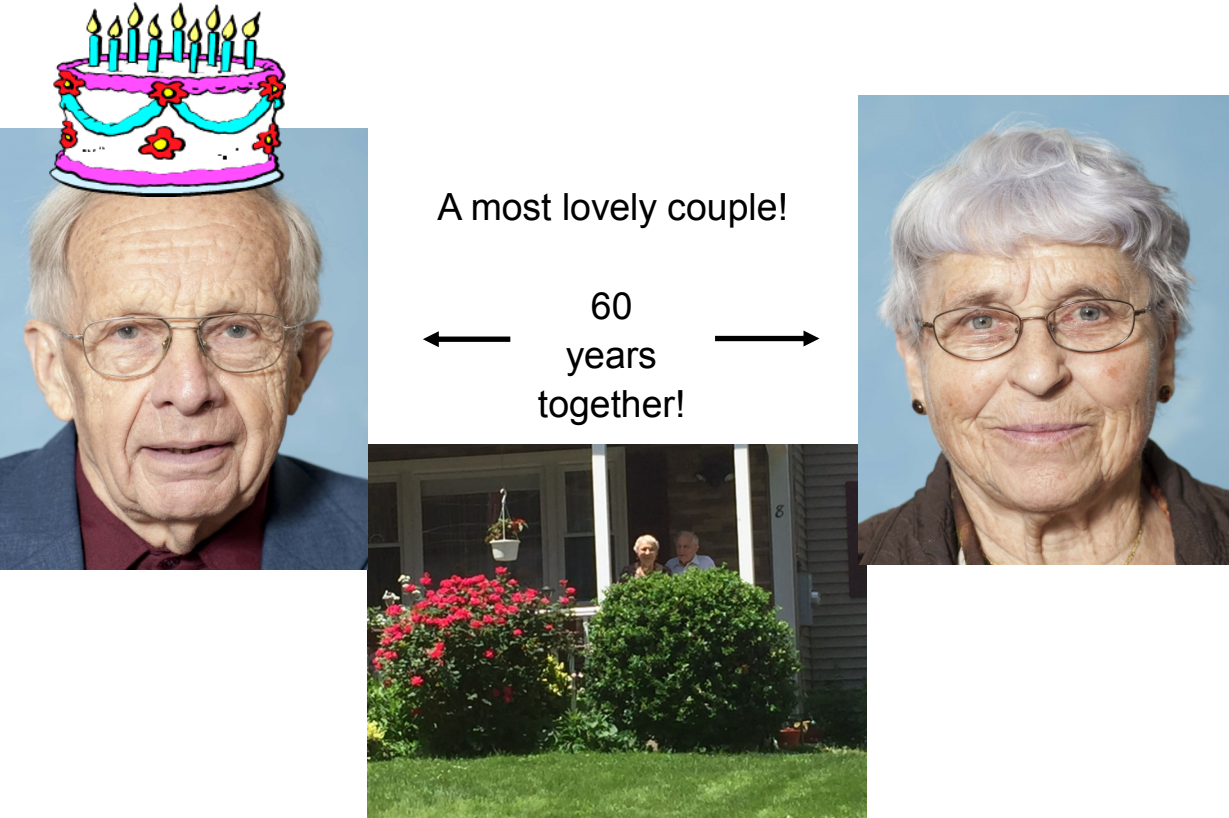
All of you know that of late Edith and Guenther have been having health challenges, and their getting older. (None of the rest of us have the latter problem, right?). Well just a week or so ago, Edith was in the hospital with her dear Guenther at her side and their wondrous children Heidi and Harry.

To be clear, this was the week before Guenther’s 88th birthday! And, it was also the week before the Mamets were to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

Those milestones are not minor, nor have been the Mamet’s contribution to Grace and its people. When I first came to Grace. I quickly came to realize that they were regular visitors of those sick or suffering. Edith was in constant touch with anyone that was having any difficulty. She would pray for them and with them and still does.

Besides joining Edith in visits of others, Guenther has been a one man show in preparing the church for special holidays, making sure the numbers are up for the hymns each Sunday and making fixes to things requiring attention. Guenther loves his church and has served it for decades. He has been a mentor for Walter, and has taught him a great deal about our magnificent and modest church.

As they face the challenges of getting older with its frustrations and more occasional joys, lets remember this very special couple and all they mean to Grace and its people. They are shining examples of who this church is, now and forever.



HOSPITALITY AND CREATION CARE: NANCY URBAN

February 16: Following Worship

When the issue of our use of plastic, paper and or ceramic for our hospitality time every Sunday came up at Council, it was suggested that the people who provide hospitality and the people who benefit from their efforts meet on a Sunday and have a conversation.

We know that:

- We have been called to be caretakers of God’s Creation
- There is a huge issue of plastic leaking toxins into the ground water or being digested by animals and birds causing their death.
- We pay a lot for garbage disposal and we are running out of options.
- We have only a few people who are willing to host a hospitality time.
- If we use plastic, it goes into the garbage.
- If we use paper, it goes into the garbage.
- If we use ceramic and silver ware, it has to be washed in a sanitized way.
- It takes time and effort to prepare and clean up after Hospitality time.

Our conversation on February 16th will give an opportunity to look at these issues in a realistic way, review the current Creation Care Policy, and send recommendations to the Council for action. Do we go on as we have been? Do we ban plastic and foam from church use? Do we seek to educate more? Do we seek to make any changes? You are invited to be part of the conversation.

EQUAL EXCHANGE / FAIR TRADE

Since the notice went out a few months ago regarding using only Fair Trade coffee and tea for all Grace functions, there have been some questions.

1. Why Equal Exchange? Equal exchange works closely with many church denominations including Lutherans. They buy directly from the farmer’s co-ops around the world and then they package and market the product. Part of all sales goes to support Lutheran World Relief. Nancy Urban has been able to order these products at wholesale cost, with free shipping, and will continue to do so. Grace then reimburses her for the cost.
2. What if I want to donate some coffee or tea? A few markets in the area, including “10,000 Villages” in West Hartford carry Equal Exchange-Fair Trade Products, but they are more costly than the wholesale price we can get by ordering directly. One could donate money to Grace designating that it is for hospitality. There are other markets that carry Fair Trade, but not necessarily Equal Exchange
3. If you wish to be supportive of this program, which has been supported by the ELCA for many years by using organic Fair Trade products in your home, Nancy has coffee and tea that can be purchased at cost. If there is a demand, hot chocolate mixes, mini chocolate bars and chocolate chips or special coffees can also be ordered.
4. Keep an eye out for more information at Hospitality time or in future Grace Notes.



PEACE AND JUSTICE – OUR CALLING

(continued from page 1)

Remarkably a couple of weeks ago was the “week of prayer” for Christian Unity. Our presiding bishop, joined with three others, including her counterpart in the Episcopal Church, Bishop Michael Curry to produce a wonderful devotional book that you can find here:

<https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Four-Way-Week-Devotionals-2019.pdf?>

It is called, “Justice, and Only Justice.”

For those of you who may struggle to access this, here are some excerpts from the devotional, the prayers, too, are wonderful:

“Worship is worthless... if we present our religious sacrifices week after week while allowing others around us to continue to be sacrificed on the altars of greed and power and prejudice.”

“Worship is worthless... if it is not accompanied by earnest words and genuine acts of justice.”

These are some of the words used to express the meaning of Amos 5: 22-25.

Martin Luther King, Jr. “No, no, we are not satisfied, and will not be satisfied, until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.”

Our Presiding Bishop’s words (not all of them by any stretch) are equally powerful and profoundly grounded in the Gospel and our Savior Jesus Christ who came not to be served, but to serve:

“Jesus and Pilate have an interesting exchange about truth in the Gospel according to John. Jesus said, “For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’” (John 18: 37-38). A remarkable claim by Jesus and an interesting reply by Pilate. I wonder, was Pilate earnestly seeking for truth or was he cynically dismissing the existence of truth?

So how do we live as people of Truth in a time of spin? In baptism God has claimed us as beloved children joined to the death and resurrection of Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. We now belong to the Truth. That doesn’t mean we have the Truth or even know everything about truth. The Truth doesn’t belong to us. No, by God’s gracious act we belong to the Truth. We don’t make truth claims, Truth claims us.

(next page)



Peace Plan That Does Not Bring Peace

They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

-Jeremiah 6:14 NRSV

President Trump’s proposed Middle East ‘peace plan,’ titled “Peace to Prosperity,” will not bring peace nor is it a realistic plan. Instead, his proposal -- formulated with Israel without Palestinian participation -- ensures violence, continued animosity, and further encroachment by Israel on land that belongs to the people of Palestine.

It is for those reasons that the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) calls upon the international community to take up the mantle of brokering an agreement that brings peace and security to Israelis and Palestinians without trampling upon the rights of either.

For many years, the NCC has joined in supporting a two-state solution, the right of refugees to return to their homes, the dismantlement of the settlements, and the establishment of Jerusalem as a shared international city. This latest plan, developed without input from Palestinians, does not move us toward peace or resolve conflict in the region.

In order to be viable, a nation must have contiguous land with populations secure in their borders and in control of their destiny. The current peace deal does not offer this. The illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory has become normative, both Israeli and Palestinian societies have become restive, and the dream of peaceful coexistence side-by-side has all but extinguished. Nothing about the new Trump peace plan breathes life into the hope for justice and peace.

Instead of bringing both Palestinians and Israelis to the negotiating table, the Administration has worked only with the Israelis. Rather than mapping out an authentic Palestinian state, the architects of the plan have put forth a map recognizing Israeli-imposed “facts on the ground” and granting Palestinians the remaining pockmarked non-contiguous territory, which resembles a block of Swiss cheese more than a nation-state. The plan reinforces the indignity by offering the Palestinians a \$50 billion payoff to do what they can to accept this untenable “solution.”

We urge all parties to get back to the hard work of creating a real plan for justice and peace. This land and all the people who live there deserve no less.

Read the statement online.

See also:

[Settlements Contrary to International Law, Immoral](#)

[Group Pilgrimage Statement on Israel and Palestine](#)

[NCC Laments Opening of US Embassy in Jerusalem](#)

[NCC Opposes U.S. Decision to Declare Jerusalem as Capital of Israel](#)

[A Message Following the National Council of Churches’ Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, September, 2017](#)

[Statement by General Secretaries Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit and Jim Winkler given at the NCC/WCC Consultation on the Holy Land](#)

[Reaffirmation of Our Commitments to Peace in the Middle East In Light of the 1980 Middle East Policy Statement](#)



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

ELCA presiding bishop issues response to President Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" document

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6)

I am very dismayed and disturbed by President Trump's announcement of a "peace plan" that, I fear, will bring greater insecurity for Israelis and Palestinians instead of peace.

Our church has long held that any successful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on negotiation between the parties. Unfortunately, this "plan" has involved only one party. A plan made for a people without consulting that people will not bring peace. It also seeks to remove from the table many of the final status issues by effectively giving a green light to Israel to further entrench the occupation, rather than end it, - a policy we have advocated for years.

Rather than drawing together Israelis and Palestinians to reach a peace accord, the effect of this plan will be further alienation and, I am afraid, more tension, with the possibility of new, violent responses. This path will not lead to peace with justice. It will not promote

reconciliation. But it will reinforce extremists in Israel, in Palestine and throughout the region, decreasing security for everyone.

Just last week, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding

Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed the Security Council, noting:

"It is sadly not a surprise that a recent survey of millennials by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) found that almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of Israeli millennials thought the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would "never end", making them the least optimistic of the people surveyed in countries affected by war. Palestinians were also pessimistic, although slightly less so, with 52 per cent believing that the conflict would never end.

"The international community bears a responsibility to help build a different future for these young Israelis and Palestinians, one that promises hope, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence rather than perpetual occupation and conflict."

She closed by saying she "would like to emphasize the continued urgency of resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements."

Therefore, I call upon President Trump to develop a different plan that would involve all parties, and to pursue efforts that would adhere to international law and human rights conventions. This plan should ensure the protection and preservation of internationally recognized human rights and realize, for Palestinians and for Israelis, two viable, secure states living side by side in peace.

Elizabeth A. Eaton

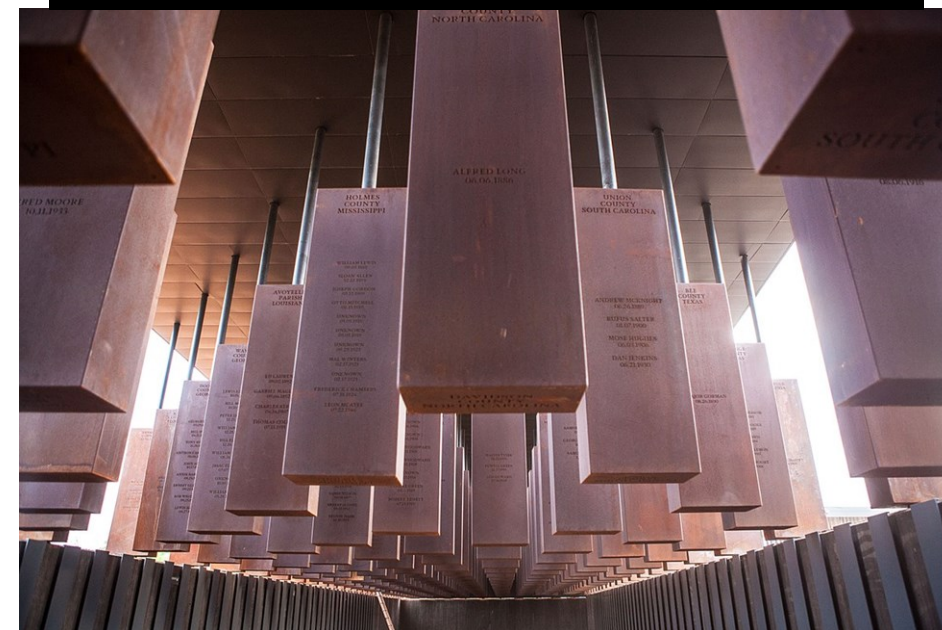
The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America- -

PEACE AND JUSTICE – OUR CALLING

How then do we live? In deep humility, profound gratitude, and real joy. We listen to Jesus' voice and hear that Jesus is God's "Yes, Yes" to life and "no, no" to death. This word is for everyone."

She goes on to pray, "There is a lot of noise in the world, O God; including our own that lays claim to truth. Bring us to a place of stillness where we can listen to you. Your truth has claimed us and set us free. As we listen, let our yes be your yes to life. In the name of Jesus. Amen."

I suspect you feel as I do, the deep and profound thankfulness for our presiding bishop and her marvelous ability to grasp and respond to the challenges of this time and day. Please find that stillness for yourself as I try to find it, too. God is in control. That is the Truth and our salvation.



THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

THE STEEPLE STORY CONTINUES...

From my earliest days at Grace I heard a number of different stories about its steeple. Yes, it reaches into the sky and helps us locate it when we are flying over it, viewing it from a higher point in the city or as we look up at it as we come to worship or do God’s work at Grace. The problem, of course, has been that we have had leaks over the years, an unplanned element in the last capital campaign, and then there is the matter of painting it. It is tall!

Just as we were with excitement moving forward on our solar panel project, the people examining the strength and resilience of our roof for holding the panels discovered overflowing buckets of water up a couple of ladder climbs from the balcony. They emptied the overflowing buckets, placed there by our organist, treasurer, pruner, photographer, and Mr. Fix-it, Dale Eberhardt. He was the one who climbed up there in the past to witness some modest leaks and with his budget hat on, simply placed the buckets there.

Unfortunately, the problem has gotten considerably worse and there has been damage in our steeple. And, we need to do something about it! The pictures below show you our steeple inside and out, and we have engaged a very thoughtful gentleman to help us figure out what to do. Interestingly, his father and brothers were the ones who replaced our slate roof with the exceptional shingles that remain solid and near perfect after 19 years. No need to replace the roof, but it would appear that we need to do something about the steeple.

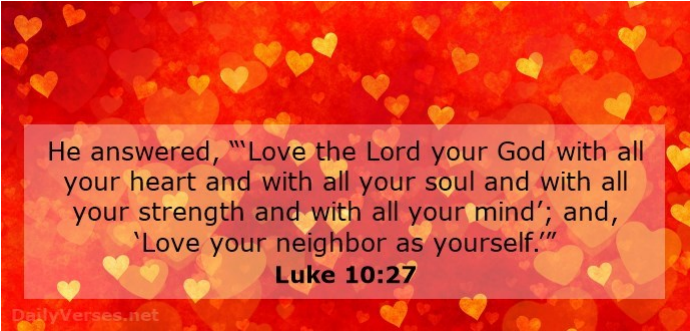
We have options and will discuss them at our budget meeting coming up on February 9th.

Not much to say but, wow! We will need to spend roughly \$15,000 to make repairs or more like \$30,000 to do all that needs doing.

Steeple are beautiful, and ours is, too. BUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



HAPPY VALENTIN'S DAY
FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 14, 2020



Janet’s Closet

Grace’s clothing ministry




Janet’s Closet is open to the community on Wednesdays from 11 a.m.—1 p.m.


Donations of all types of gently used and season appropriate clothing are requested and always appreciated. Donations can be dropped off at the church when Janet’s Closet is open.

Can’t make the donations when Janet’s Closet is open? Call the church office, 860-527-7792. If we don’t pick up use option 3 to leave a message, or email the church office at officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net


February Birthdays & Anniversaries 2020



Otto Koenig	04-Feb
Nilda Bolorin	06-Feb
Sally Nolen	07-Feb
Nina Kretschmer	09-Feb
Lee Whittemore	10-Feb
Melissa Brown	11-Feb
Martin Holmeen	16-Feb
Randall De Rosa	18-Feb



Susan Carey	22-Feb
Roy Nelson	23-Feb
Paul Yigle-Kaljob	23-Feb
Lisa Dugan	24-Feb
Joseph Kisiel	26-Feb



Otto & Annelies Koenig	02/09
Pastor Rick Kremer & Judy Butterworth-Kremer	02/09

May you all be blessed as you celebrate your special days!

Happy Anniversary!

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact the office, 860-527-7792 or email officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net to update our records.