

THE CIRCUIT WRITER

Volume 39

Issue 2

I have enjoyed sharing our theology of grace with you over the past month. What I have enjoyed most is hearing your grace stories. For this newsletter, instead of an article from me, we are sharing our stories of faith, our stories of grace. I hope you enjoy reading "Grace Place." You have such beautiful stories of your encounters with Christ! Keep them coming! Keep telling them to all who will listen!

May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet, and may you be Christ for everyone you meet. I pray you know the grace and peace of our Lord today and always, Denna

Grace Place

Ron Williamson: The saying goes that something did or didn't happen, "By the grace of God". My mother told me that I was nearly hit by a car when I was two years old. While she was talking to my brother, I removed the safety belt on my stroller. She turned around to the sound of screeching car horns and saw me sitting in the highway with a car bumper inches from my head. I can surely relate to the fact that by the grace of God I was saved, and that God personally saved my life before I ever knew Him – prevenient grace. I have no doubt whatsoever, that He has known me from eternity. Ever since I can remember, I have felt the presence of God in my life; not just in an abstract way but a real personal, "He is with me constantly kind of way". I feel His presence as real as I feel it when another person is in the room; even when I intentionally try to ignore His voice.

We tend to think of the things people do as great or small as if there is some hierarchy of labors that can give us a higher stature with the Almighty. My belief is that there is no great or small with God in this regard; that serving Him by faithfully taking out the trash after a 5th Sunday lunch, or visiting an ill or dying person has the same degree of greatness as leading

His people out of bondage. There is only doing His will out of love.

Growing up knowing my "Great Escape" experience I used to think, the reason God saved me was because He had some great task He wanted me to perform – one of great worldwide importance; a Nobel prize effort. As a kid and young adult, I tried to figure out what that was; waiting to "get the call"; waiting to hear His voice directing me to take the world by storm. At some point I resigned myself to think that the call wasn't coming until God spoke to me in His way and time saying this, "I didn't save you just to do something great, I saved you just because you are greatly loved".

Catherine Harris: From the time I allowed my heart to open I have become aware how God continues to show Himself. I watch for and recognize beautiful "God Moments". One such moment still stirs my heart. Our son lived in Asia for six years and due to distance we were able to see him only three times during the interim. One of these visits occurred when we traveled to Taiwan to assist him during his recovery from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident. We were in Taiwan for almost two months.

As background, Taiwan is not a Christian nation. Commerce never stops. Every day starts, unfolds and ends the same way. It was like living in a loop film. Needless to say it was an emotional low to see our son struggle. After he was discharged from the hospital and returned to his apartment, one morning we heard music in the distance. We traced the sound to an elementary school across the street where children were playing Amazing Grace on flutophones. As it turned out this was a tune they played every school morning. It was a sweet sound that served as a constant reminder through the days and weeks that God was with us. Some say coincidence; I say God Moment!

Mary Jane Lifsey: After attending a membership class, I publically accepted God as my savior and joined the Methodist Church I had always attended at the age of ten. Jim and I have been life-long Methodists from coast to coast and north to south. God is very real to me. He is not some myth or figure to scare children to mind their parents. He helped me raise our four children. He comforted me when my parents died and he got me through some serious health issues. He brought me the love of my life and blessed us with a long, happy marriage.

Grace is:

- knowing that God loves me unconditionally.
- knowing I am never alone. God walks with me.
- knowing that regardless of my shortcomings and/or mistakes, God understands and is there.
- when I ask God to forgive me and He does.
- when I hear God tell me He is pleased when I show love to my fellow man.
- my desire not to disappoint God.
- recognizing I will disappoint not only God but myself too.
- my conversations with God and loving to hear His voice.
- loving my relationship with God.
- finding meaning in God's words - The Bible.
- defined in actions of love and being aware of our love and service to mankind.

Ken Hall: I was a policeman for twenty-five years, starting from 1976 and retiring in 2001. I got in the profession because I wanted to help people. It's a really tough job because I found out early that you can't help people who won't help themselves. I kept trying and occasionally I could see that I had made a positive change in someone's life.

The saying "By the Grace of God" rings throughout my life. The Grace of God intervened many times during my years on the street from gun fights to being stabbed. I witnessed several friends lose their lives on the job and saw many injured for life as a result of the profession they choose. I was "blessed" to be allowed to live.

May 2, 1991, was a changing point in my life. I was involved in a police motorcycle accident a little after midnight which left me seeking the Lord to spare my life and in exchange I would change my life. He did and I did.

My devotion to disaster response is the way I have found to help people and hopefully make the world a better place. I asked God to get me out of the wreck and off that city street alive and He did. I was given a chance to live and I decided I needed to make something positive out of what life I had been allowed to keep.

Meeting "Dink" and witnessing her faith was the second "Grace of God" which helped me get back in church and really start exploring my relationship with Christ. It amazes me how it took nearly sixty-five years to get to this spiritual place in my life.

Judy Webster: When I was about 5 years old, my kitty got hung under the back seat of my car. My dad and a couple more men had to take the seat out to reach her. I started praying she would be okay. I prayed my little heart out while they were trying to get her out. Well, they finally reached her and I thanked God over and over. That was my first *grace* and I will never forget it. The first time God spoke to me was at the funeral of a co-worker's son. He had been my hairdresser and many times we had discussed if either of us had accepted Jesus as our savior.

As I sat there waiting for the service to start I heard him say, "You need to be baptized". Stunned I looked around and no one was near. I didn't say anything to anyone about what I heard. After that several times when I passed the church I would hear him say those same words. After several months I went to the pastor of the church where we were attending and told him. They were doing a membership class and having a baptism at the end. I told him I wanted to be baptized but did not want the others to know why I was doing this. After that I never hear his voice when I drove past the church. Since then I have been a strong believer.

Bob Henley: When I got my first real job it had always been my dream to learn to fly and I bought an airplane manufactured in 1946 and got my license. However, the plane did not have a radio and was in need of some repairs. One day the fuel pump failed but it did have a gravity reserve tank with one hour of fuel on board. The next day I left out for an airport 45 minutes away to meet a mechanic that could fix the problem. I was flying due north until I intersected a four lane road but the visibility had deteriorated to the point that I could only see one mile or less. I didn't know which way to go so I turned right.

After about 7 minutes it was apparent that I chose the wrong way and turned around with my fuel situation serious. After another 7 minutes I had not found the airport with my fuel situation critical. Believing I had no other options, I started an approach to land on the highway, hoping traffic was light and there were no power lines. Out of habit I looked to my right and then to my left for any air traffic and saw the airport to my left and made an immediate hard turn approach and touched down as soon as possible. While rolling out the engine died from lack of fuel. After a sigh, I whispered to myself, "I'm good..." Over the next two hours we manually filled the reserve tank and replaced the fuel pump. It was getting late so without checking the weather, I hopped in and took off for my home base. Within five miles of my airport a huge thunderstorm had me surrounded and again I needed to get on the ground fast.

At this point I was no longer impressed with my skills and turned to prayer for help getting out of this mess. At the moment my wheels touched down, I was in a deluge and could not see anything but was able to sit out the storm on the ground. This was a lesson in grace I will never forget.



Wanda Balsley: This is a page from my Grandmother's book and the last paragraph is mine.

J.T. Reed, my father, was a well-known Christen, a preacher and a gospel singer. He held many positions in the Church of the Nazarene. Mother was a member of Mr. Ed Pugh's Sunday School Class. Therefore, we were in church growing up. I heard sermons of how we are all sinners and we must be saved from going to the fiery hell when we die. People were invited to go to the alter to pray for forgiveness after the sermon and then they were saved. I wanted to be saved. After yearning for a time and finally being invited, I went to the alter where many people prayed over me. I remember standing up in tears and walking into Daddy's arms. My baptism was by immersion at the church on October 14, 1911. Daddy passed away June 26, 1952.

I continued to attend church even though Mother rarely did since she worked shifts as a nurse. The preaching was about being saved and satisfied. I didn't understand sanctification. Then Cliff Ingram came to Monterey. He was pastor to the Methodist Church with his wife Elise. They met with the youth group on Sunday evenings. They played shuffleboard, ping pong and ate tomato soup with grilled cheese sandwiches. I joined my peers and on May 13, 1957. I had my membership transferred. It was a transformation of freeing my spirit to going on to perfection (sanctification).

A favorite Psalm of mine is Psalm 42. Verse 1 says, "As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God." Now in my senior years and after a lot of life happenings I still thirst for my God. I praise Him for His unending love and rejoice in his blessings, knowing there is a greater grace to come.

AMAZING GRACE

Larry Reed: On August 19, 2017 my grandson Connor and three best friends (Al, Dan and Ralph) were pursuing happiness on our motorcycles, riding on a curvy rural road on our way to an anticipated Tex-Mex lunch. I was in the lead as we topped a blind hill that peaked into a ninety degree left turn. As I attempted to make the turn, my bike drifted toward the right side of the road into some gravel wash. Trying not to slide out, I found myself onto the grass shoulder of the road and ultimately into a shallow ditch. Still upright, the bike quickly encountered the end of a metal driveway culvert with a loud thud. In an instant my torso encountered the fuel tank, instrument cluster, and handlebars, then going over the handlebars, crashing onto my helmeted head and ultimately piled in a heap on the weed covered driveway surface. The quarter-ton motorcycle had careened over me and landed to my right. I give this description to emphasize this was not a trivial incident. In my medical career, I have seen death as a result of lesser such accidents.

I slowly rolled over as Connor was over me concerned about my welfare. My neck and back were extremely painful, but I was able to move. After a few minutes, I felt I would be able to stand and I insisted upon being helped to my feet. The only visible injuries were some minor lacerations on my left hand and right forearm. Once standing, the very first thought to come to my mind, and my first statement to my friends was, "Amazing Grace!"

My party suggested an ambulance be called, but I persuaded Connor to ride back to my house to retrieve the truck and bike trailer while Al, Dan and Ralph stayed with me. Connor returned after about 20 minutes. They loaded the bike and me, and Connor and I headed to the hospital in Crossville. After a thorough evaluation and six hours later, I was wheeled out of the ER and on my way home. Results: a very painful back, minor lacerations, bruises on the chest and abdomen, no broken bones or other internal injuries! Again, AMAZING GRACE! I surmised that God assuredly had (has) other

plans for me. To Him belongs the praise, to Him I give thanks! His will be done!

Catherine Harris: Filling the "God Hole"

When I was 12 years old, my parents stopped attending church and being 12 years old, that was okay by me. I slept in Sunday mornings and continued to sleep for the next thirty-five years. I felt no pull from God and He was easy to ignore as I went on with my independent life. Out of self-defense I warmed the pew beside Terry, but didn't feel any sort of tug at my heart. From time to time I spoke candidly with friends and family about how I felt or didn't feel and mused, "If God is good then why do bad things happen to good people?" My closest friend explained how she leaned on her faith and couldn't get along without it, but I was empty and didn't know it.

Then our Congregation called a young minister fresh from seminary. His first sermon series was on how to pray, followed by a series on the different kinds of grace. Shortly thereafter he roped me into chaperoning a youth retreat, "Fun in the Sun," held in Myrtle Beach. Having already raised our two teenagers, I was less than thrilled at the prospect. He warned me I was going to witness an exuberant crowd of wildly excited people. Understatement! A contemporary Christian band fired up at the first group gathering and everyone immediately hopped on folding chairs, singing, waving hands in the air and praising God. After I got over myself, I was right there with them.

God was coming for me. I felt an overwhelming tug at my heart after that weekend. They say hind sight is 20/20. Looking back I know God had been pursuing me since I wandered away in my youth. He had been planting seeds in my independent heart all along and used a youth retreat to pull me back. He planted himself in the God hole in my heart that weekend.



THE COTTAGE MINISTRY

January was difficult! We were closed three days during the month due to weather. Averaged about sixty shoppers this month and gave food to four families. The quieter time gave us time to clean and rearrange the displays. Thanks to everyone that contributed to our "Souper Bowl". We will be able to fill the pantry! Donations were great this month, many came in and went out quickly. Only six weeks till spring!

MONTEREY'S FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Nick Axen
- 2 Mary Phelps
- 5 Dan Sheffler
- 9 Edna Drysdale
- 13 Julie Sheffler
- 17 John Boswell
- 17 Merrill Ford
- 18 Marion Barwick
- 18 Keelan Milligan
- 18 Lluana Simpson
- 28 Ken Wiggins

MONTHLY & WEEKLY CHURCH SCHEDULING

Sunday School & Worship	9:45am & 11:00am
Youth Group	Sundays 5:30pm – 7:00 pm
Monterey Hilltop Chorale	Mondays at 6:00pm
Civitan Club	3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:00pm
Choir Rehearsal	Wednesdays at 6:30pm
Cottage Ministry	Friday & Saturday, 9am – Noon
Garden Club	2nd Tuesday of each month at 10:30am

February Worship Leaders

- Liturgist Marcy Milligan
- Ushers Judy & David Webster
- Acolytes Marcy & Keelan Milligan & Sophia

A RECORD OF OUR FAITHFULNESS JANUARY 2018

JANUARY FINANCIAL RESULTS (Operating Funds)

1/1/18	BEGINNING BALANCE	\$13,974.99
	TITHES AND OFFERINGS	14,778.07
	LESS: EXPENSES	(13,728.33)
1/31/18	ENDING BALANCE	\$15,024.73

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

Amount Paid in Tithes for 2017:

Please call the office if you would like a statement.

Administrative Council

Will meet Tuesday, February 13th at 6 pm.

Ash Wednesday Service: February 14th at 6pm.

Education Committee

Will meet Tuesday, February, 20th @ 6pm.

Starting February 18th: Lenten Sermon Series, This is us. Invite a friend and take the three week challenge...*be present at least three weeks a month for worship together*. We are better together!

Burks Elementary – Granola Bars are needed for the backpacks given to 61 children each Friday to take home so they'll have food and milk for the weekend. Other items are given by the Food Bank but we'd like to also give them a granola bar as a treat. If you'd like to contribute, please leave granola bars on the container in the hallway near the front door.

Banner Team is looking for creative individuals to help design and make banners. If you want to be included in this fun project, please contact Janet Erskine or the office.

Monterey Garden Club will meet Tuesday, February 13th at 10:30 am in the Fellowship Hall.





Monterey United Methodist Church

February 2018

The people of The United Methodist Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 9:00a-Cottage Ministry	3 9:00a Cottage Ministry
4 9:45a Sunday School 11:00a Worship Service 5:30p Youth Group	5 6:00p Monterey Hilltop Chorale	6	7 6:30a Choir Practice	8	9 9:00a Cottage Ministry	10 9:00a Cottage Ministry
11 9:45a Sunday School 11:00a Worship Service	12 6:00p Monterey Hilltop Chorale	13 10:30a Monterey Garden Club 6p Administrative Council	14 6p Ash Wednesday Service <i>Valentine's Day</i>	15	16 9:00a Cottage Ministry	17 9:00a Cottage Ministry
18 1st Sunday in Lent 9:45a Sunday School 11:00a Worship Service – Lenton Sermon Series, This is Us 5:30p Youth Group	19 6:00p Monterey Hilltop Chorale <i>President's Day</i>	20 6:00p Civitans 6:00p Education Meeting	21 6:30a Choir Practice	22	23 9:00a Cottage Ministry	24 9:00a-Cottage Ministry
25 2nd Sunday in Lent 9:45a Sunday School 11:00a Worship Service 5:30p Youth Group	26	27	28			