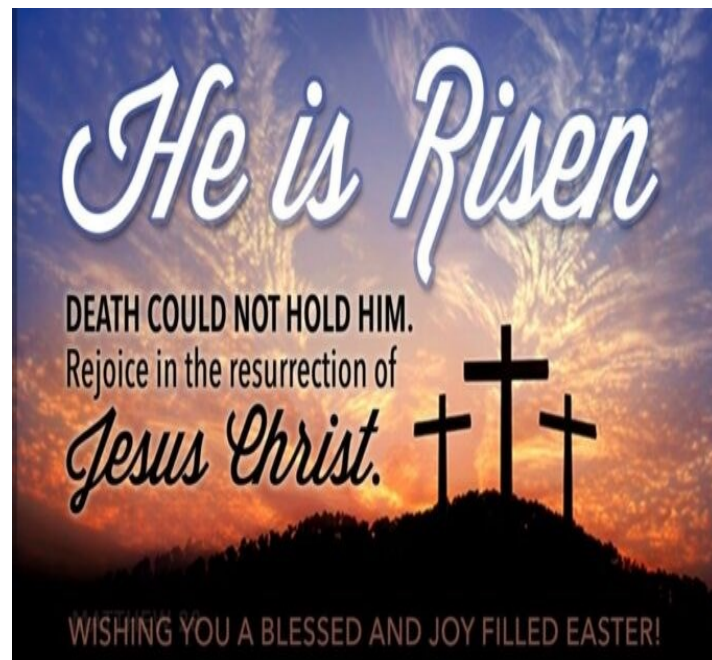


RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**REGULAR SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

9:30 a.m.      Worship in the Sanctuary  
 9:30 a.m.      Children's Sunday School  
 10:45 a.m.     Adult Sunday School

7:00 a.m. &    Comcast Cable Channel 6  
 2:00 p.m.      Comcast Cable HD Channel 914

Anytime or any day, watch the service on our YouTube channel, Grace Methodist Church of Decatur Online.  
 Our webpage is [www.decaturchurch.com](http://www.decaturchurch.com) where you will also find a link to the worship service on YouTube.

**REGULAR OFFICE HOURS**

Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



*Grace Notes*

Grace Methodist Church • 901 N. Main St. • Decatur, IL 62522 • 217-429-5374  
 Volume 169 Number 3, March 2024



***In this Issue...***

Article from Dr. Paul ———1  
 Grace Family —————3-4  
 Discipleship —————2-3  
 Congregational Care ———5  
 Financial News —————5  
 Education —————4  
 Calendar —————7

**Upcoming Sermons**

**February 25 - Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done**  
 (Matthew 6:9-13)

**March 3 - Give Us this Day Our Daily Bread**  
 (Matthew 6:9-15)

**March 10 - Forgive Us Our Sins as We Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us**  
 (Matthew 6:9-13)

**March 17 - Lead Us Not into Temptation, But Deliver Us from Evil**  
 (Matthew 6:9-13)

**March 24 - Palm Sunday**

**March 31 - EASTER**  
 Christ is Risen,  
 He is Risen Indeed

Dear church family,  
 Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we find ourselves in different seasons during the year, there are seasons in our spiritual journey too. I pray and hope in this Lenten season our sermon series on the "Lord's Prayer" will illuminate our hearts and minds to internalize the Living Words of God, making them come alive in and through our lives for the glory of our heavenly Father.

God has blessed us with the gift of new life in Christ and the opportunity to freely enjoy a wonderful place of worship and Christian fellowship here at Grace. Remember, we have been blessed to bless others. On February 15 we had a "Love Thy Neighbor" event hosted at our church by the Church Council members. This event was planned by our church council to reconnect with our immediate neighbors around the church. We prepared the personal invitation card under the direction of Joyce Keller who personally delivered invitations to the neighbors. It was a great evening of enjoying a light supper and a great fellowship with some of our neighbors. We will continue to plan and host such events to personally connect with our neighbors and build relationships with them to, expand the kingdom of God where God has placed us.

There are so many people around us who are disconnected from the Lord and missing God's directions and blessings in their lives. Young couples and families with children are growing up without the knowledge of true joy and freedom in Christ. They need to know Jesus so that our next generation grows up to be a godly generation. I encourage you to connect with the people in your neighborhoods and community to find opportunities to connect with them, serve them, and connect them with the Lord for the kingdom of God. I encourage you to reach out to your family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends, even strangers to invite them to your small groups and/or the worship services so that they may also have the opportunity to know Jesus, their creator and the Lord of their lives.

Now, I invite you to please pray with me for God's peace and comfort for the members of our church family who have recently lost their loved ones. Please also pray for those who are preparing for surgeries, recovering from surgeries, and dealing with health concerns and other challenges in life.

Let's remind ourselves that we are a vibrant community of believers who come together to worship the Lord, study God's word, pray, enjoy each other's fellowship, and support one another through small groups. We are committed disciples of Jesus Christ and passionately reach out to the world through the preaching of the Gospel and by participating in God's mission locally and globally.

You are a wonderful congregation! I am so blessed to be your pastor and I thank God for the privilege and honor of serving Christ Jesus alongside you all. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, let's come together to build, expand, and strengthen the kingdom of God for the glory of God. For, we were created for the glory of God. To God be the Glory!

With Love, prayers, and blessings,  
*"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift His countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).*

Pastor AP

## DISCIPLESHIP

### SOAPY Personal Daily Reading Schedule



We use our SOAPY daily readings for preparation for worship. You'll find the daily readings corresponding to the coming Sunday's message. As you read and study the texts, you will be preparing your hearts for worship and plowing up the ground for receiving the seed of God's Word. In case you have not yet engaged the SOAPY readings, you may wonder what is SOAPY?

SOAPY stands for: **S**cripture, **O**bservation, **A**pplication, **P**rayer and **Y**ielding.

Here's how to put the SOAPY principles to work: You might want to keep a SOAPY journal for notes. If you are able to find a place of solitude for your time of reading, read aloud the Scripture passage for the day. Hearing the Word is a powerful spiritual discipline. Make some Observations in your SOAPY journal by asking these questions:

- 1) What is the **Scripture** about?
- 2) **Observe:** What does this passage mean?
- 3) What truth or teaching can I **Apply** to my life?
- 4) Then write and offer a **Prayer** that helps you
- 5) **Yield** more of your life to Jesus so that your study is not for information only, but for transformation as you grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ and into His likeness.

Feb 25	Ezra 1-2	March 17	Mark 5-6
Feb 26	Ezra 3-4	March 18	Mark 7-8
Feb 27	Ezra 5-6	March 19	Mark 9
Feb 28	Ezra 7-8	March 20	Mark 10-11
Feb 29	Ezra 9-10	March 21	Mark 12
March 1	Nehemiah 1-2	March 22	Mark 13-14
March 2	Nehemiah 3-4	March 23	Mark 15-16

March 3	Nehemiah 5-6	March 24	Luke 1
March 4	Nehemiah 7-8	March 25	Luke 2
March 5	Nehemiah 9	March 26	Luke 3
March 6	Nehemiah 10	March 27	Luke 4
March 7	Nehemiah 11	March 28	Luke 5
March 8	Nehemiah 12	March 29	Luke 6
March 9	Nehemiah 13	March 30	Luke 7

March 10	Esther 1-2	March 31	Luke 8
March 11	Esther 3-4	April 1	Luke 9
March 12	Esther 5-6	April 2	Luke 10
March 13	Esther 7-8	April 3	Luke 11
March 14	Esther 9-10	April 4	Luke 12
March 15	Mark 1-2	April 5	Luke 13
March 16	Mark 3-4	April 6	Luke 14-15

## DISCIPLESHIP

Fan the Flame  
By Carol Perry and Susan Kent

When I started attending Grace nine years ago, Sig and Beth introduced me to Seedbed, Inc. A company started by JD Walt with a mission of Gathering, Connecting and Resourcing people for a Great Awakening. One of the key aspects of Seedbed is a daily devotional called the Wake-Up Call usually written by JD, but he also uses other writers to fill-in for him from time to time. Such is the case with the Lenten study this year called Altar'd but Susan Kent. What follows is a day (2/16) that reminded me of what Dr. Paul has been saying since he came to Grace. I thought it might help us to consider our faith journey through a different voice to get a deeper understanding of keeping our fire burning.

This text is focusing on Leviticus 6:8-9. The Lord said to Moses: "Give Aaron and his sons this command: 'These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar.'" Yesterday we began building an altar with our lives, and today we will learn that the altar fire must be kept burning. What does that mean? First, let's admit that many of us have not put the book of Leviticus on the top of our reading lists. It might be that it doesn't seem relevant. If you skim through the pages, the topics of skin diseases, priests, and festivals do not seem to be important to us thousands of years after it was written. I understand. Leviticus provided rules and guidelines for the Israelites after they had been rescued from slavery in Egypt and it taught them how to live practically as a reflection of their faith in the one true God. Within these guidelines are lessons about altars and offerings. They remind us of the temporary system God gave His people, but they also teach us how Jesus's life and resurrection became our ultimate offering and the fulfillment of God's covenant.

What does the Lord tell Moses about the fire for the altar? It must be kept burning. Growing up, as I watched TV, there was a commercial for a hotel chain that ended with, "We'll keep the light on for you." It conveyed a constant vigilance and readiness to welcome the guest whenever they arrived. If our lives are to be an altar, we need to stay vigilant and be ready for when the Lord returns. Each Old Testament altar would require a fire to consume the offering, and it would be up to

# March 2024



**Sun      Mon      Tue      Wed      Thu      Fri      Sat**

					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b> 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 -Adult SS	<b>4</b> 6:00 pm- Bible Study 6:00 pm -OES	<b>5</b> 6:30am -Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	<b>6</b> 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm - Anchored Kids 5:30 pm -Men's Bible Study	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 -Adult SS	<b>11</b> 6:00 pm- Bible Study 6:00 pm OES	<b>12</b> 6:30am - Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	<b>13</b> 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm - Anchored Kids 5:30 pm -Men's Bible Study	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 - Adult SS	<b>18</b> 6:00 pm- Bible Study	<b>19</b> 6:30am - Men's Bible study 9:00am -OES <b>Packing Day</b> 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	<b>20</b> 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm - Anchored Kids 5:30 pm -Men's Bible Study	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b> 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 - Adult SS	<b>25</b> 6:00 pm- Bible Study	<b>26</b> 6:30am - Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	<b>27</b> 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm - Anchored Kids 5:30 pm -Men's Bible Study	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> <i>happy Easter</i>	← Easter Sunday Sunrise Service starts at 6:00am and regular service at 9:30					



## 7 Quick Facts About Easter By Andrew Dragos

1. For the Christian faith, Easter (known as paschal in Latin and Greek, stemming from pesah in Hebrew) memorializes the most central event of all history—the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is the most significant time on the church’s calendar. At Easter, the church celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, which confirmed his identity as the Son of God, completed his earthly ministry to atone for sins, and served as a first fruit of the promise of new life and resurrection for all who put their faith in him.

2. Easter Sunday is the culmination of Holy Week, which includes Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. The forty day period of prayer and fasting called Lent ends on Maundy Thursday, when Jesus shared in the Passover meal with his disciples.

3. Easter is a moveable feast, which means it falls on different dates every year. In 325 AD the Council of Nicea established the date as the Sunday following the first full moon on or after the Spring Equinox.

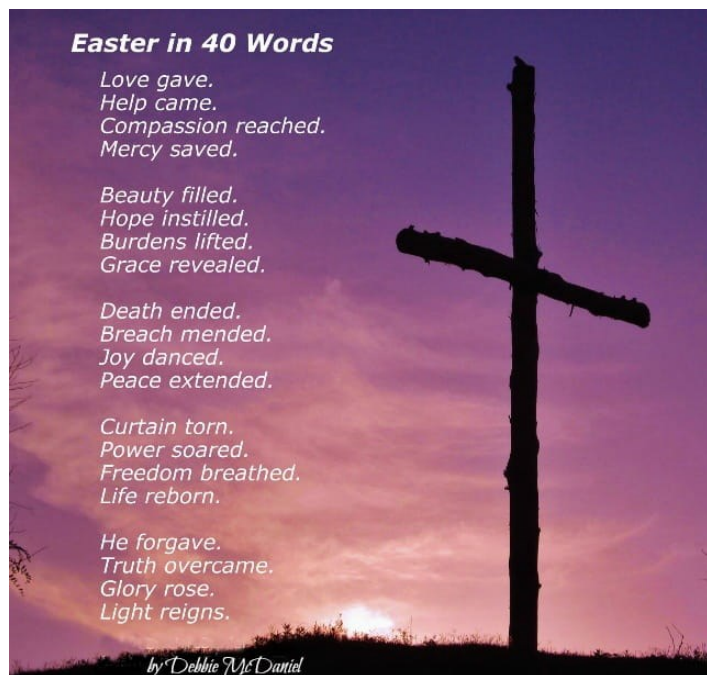
4. The Christian observance of Easter is intimately related to the Jewish festival of Passover, which celebrates Israel’s emancipation from Egyptian bondage. In the second millennium BC, Pharaoh changed his mind and released the Hebrew slaves following the fateful night of judgment on his and all of Egypt’s households for their injustice (Exodus 12:29). The angel of death passed over the Israelite homes after they marked their doorposts with lamb’s blood. Through Good Friday and Easter, Jesus serves as the ultimate Passover lamb for all people, in order that the world might escape the wages of sin (Mark 14:12; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19 Revelation 5:6).

5. Easter is the most significant and theologically potent of all Christian holy days. Not only was Jesus vindicated by God and raised for our forgiveness of sins (Romans 4:24-25), but his

resurrection serves as a model for the promise of the Christian hope of eternal bodily existence and the renewal of all creation (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2). Indeed, Paul said that without Christ’s resurrection, Christian faith is useless, and all are still in their sins (1 Corinthians 15:13-18).

6. The origin of the Easter bunny and egg tradition is disputed, but it was likely brought to America by German immigrants in the 18th century. They both serve as apt symbols for renewal and new creation. Eggs have been decorated since ancient times, so their origin is unrelated to Easter, but the practice was likely adopted and appropriated for Easter since eggs are traditionally one of the foods from which Christians fast during Lent. When the Lenten fast was broken, people would celebrate with fresh egg baskets and colorful decorations.

7. Attempts to trace the history of the Christian holy day to pagan origins have proven to be vain, although the mythic theme of heroes dying and rising are archetypal and remain at the center of human consciousness. C. S. Lewis called Christianity the “myth which is also a fact,” because its story actually occurred in history—real time and space.



the priest to tend to the flame. It would have been fairly easy to keep the fire burning when the offering was first placed on the altar, but to maintain the fire throughout the day and night would have meant a constant watch. The priest couldn’t set the offering on the altar and walk away or get distracted. He couldn’t check on the fire one day a week or when it was convenient. He had to fan the flame to remain alert and ready to encounter the presence of God.

Being a follower of Jesus means we are also asked to fan the flame of our spiritual lives. The disciples didn’t clock in from 9 to 5 and take the weekends off. We cannot pop into church and check the box of weekly worship or monthly giving. We must fan the flame and attend to the fire on a daily basis so we may experience the fullness of life in Christ. The apostle Paul, a follower of Jesus who wrote and influenced many of the books in the New Testament, warned other believers to “not quench the spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19). Think of a campfire that has dirt or ash strewn on it. The flame will be diminished and could go out. When we are inconsistent in spending time with Jesus, it’s like dampening a fire with ash so the heat does not reach as far as it once did and the fuel doesn’t burn as brightly.

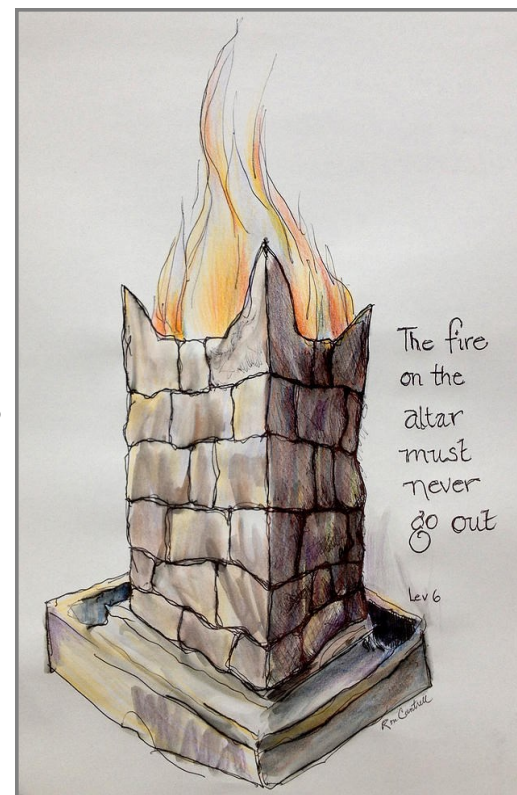
How brightly are you burning right now?

Where has ash been thrown on the fire of your spiritual life?

When we fan the flame with our attentiveness, we become ready to respond as the Holy Spirit leads us and we become light to those around us.

In what ways are you quenching the Spirit by not attending to your spiritual life?

What will you do this week to fan the flame of your altar?



### GRACE FAMILY

To the people of Grace Church:

Please accept my heartfelt and sincere thanks for allowing me to share your pathway over the last twenty years. Your generosity in the love gift given at the end of January was much appreciated, but your love, care, and good wishes are even more precious.

I will miss you!  
Arlis DeJaynes

## ECONOMY SHOP

We’re getting new flooring!!! Thanks to the Grace Methodist Foundation for their generous donation, we are able to purchase the new flooring. Out with the carpet and in with the vinyl!

Our end of winter sale started February 19 th and ends March 8th . We will close the week of March 11th to install the flooring and reopen on Monday, March 18th. Be sure to come by and check out our new look and, of course, our spring clothing, Easter and spring decorations and lots of new treasures. We have a large selection of women’s and men’s clothing, books, linens and kitchen items.

If you are looking for something new to do this spring, what about volunteering at the shop? Give Judy Madding a call at 217-864-4522.

**We will be having a Special Sunrise Service**

**Easter morning at 6:00am**

**In addition to our regular 9:30 Service**



## GRACE FAMILY

### Financial Manager

Ruth Ross has recently resigned as Financial Manager of Grace. She is temporarily being replaced by Brenda Pride and Jene' Row who will job share this assignment. Many thanks to Ruth for the time she has served Grace in this position, and we wish her blessings in the next season of her life.

### Office Volunteers

Calling all men and women who may have a few hours a week to serve as a receptionist in the church office. Your duties are small, but of great importance to the office staff. Shift hours are 10:00 to 1:00 and 1:00 to 4:00. You may volunteer to work one day a week every week, every other week, once a month or whatever works with your schedule.

Please contact  
Joanne Boldt via email [mjboldt@comcast.net](mailto:mjboldt@comcast.net) or see me at church any Sunday.

## FINANCIALS

As of 1/31/24

YTD Income:	\$37,683.87
YTD Expenses:	65,203.37
Net Income/(Loss)	\$(27,519.50)

## EDUCATION

### From your Christian Education team....

Our Anchored Kids sang for the Ash Wednesday service, and blessed us all with their heartfelt songs, reminding us that Jesus, before his crucifixion, told his disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, that He would send a helper, the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that each one of our kiddos has a person assigned to them, to pray for their needs? These prayer warriors read the kids' prayer requests each week, so they know what is on the kids' hearts.

After the Ash Wednesday service, several of our kids got to meet their prayer warriors! It was a special moment, and the parents are so thankful that we have this program in place to pray for their kids.

Stop by our bulletin board in the hallway outside Great Hall, and see the prayer warriors' photos.

Hope Academy has reached out to ask if we could spare one hour a week to help out at a new food pantry, sponsored by Northeast Community Fund. It is open two days a week at Hope. They need help on Fridays from 3-4, escorting parents to the food pantry. If you have an hour to spare and would like to help out, please call Cindy (217-855-4053) or Judy (217-864-4522).



## February 14 - March 24

### HELP SAVE LIVES IN DECATUR

You can protect mothers and children by joining the worldwide mobilization to pray and fast for an end to abortion!

Through prayer and fasting, peaceful vigils and community outreach, 40 Days for Life has inspired 1,000,000 + volunteers!

With God's help, here are the proven results in 30 coordinated campaigns:

- Over 20,000 babies saved from abortion
- Over 200 abortion workers converted
- Over 100 abortion centers closed

Here's how to take part in 40 Days for Life in our community.

**Vigil Location:** Across the street from Planned Parenthood at 3021 N. Oakland (west parking lot at Hourans Florist)

**Vigil hours:** Monday –Saturday  
7am to 7pm daily

**Local Contact :** Cecilia, 217-412-0063  
[prayersforyour8384@gmail.com](mailto:prayersforyour8384@gmail.com)

**Learn more . . .** Get involved . . . And sign up for prayer times by visiting our campaign at the web address shown below!

[40daysforlife.com/en/Decatur](http://40daysforlife.com/en/Decatur)

## CONGREGATIONAL CARE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let us praise the Lord for these wonderful sunny days as winter comes to a close. Trees are budding and people are getting ready to plant gardens and flowers. Spring is a beautiful season that the Lord has given us and we should enjoy it as the Lord intended. Easter is approaching and we will be celebrating our Savior's resurrection on March 31 at 6:00 am (sunrise service) and 9:30 am. Come praise the Lord on this blessed day with us.

### PRAYER WALK

Please come join the prayer walkers at Hope Academy on Monday mornings at 7:45 as they walk and pray for the students and teachers. They also meet in Grace's sanctuary every Tuesday afternoon at 4:00pm to pray for an hour. Please join them for worship of the Lord for that hour.

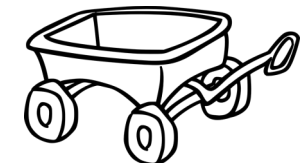
### HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

These greetings are for all that are homebound or in care facilities.

Lorene March -March 4th  
Norma Corey - March 12th  
Jack Kenny –March 15th

If you do not know where to send a card feel free to call either Karyn or me at 429-5374

### THE LITTLE RED WAGON!



Just because winter is coming to an end does not mean that we do not need food (especially breakfast treats) in the little red wagon. Jeff and the ones he serves at the Oasis appreciate the many donations that the generous congregation of Grace Methodist Church provide. God bless all of you and I know that the Lord is smiling down on each of you.

God be with you, and I'll see you next month.

Living under God's love and protection,  
Mary Grace