

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.decaturgace.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 6252 • 217-429-5374
 Volume 169 Number 4 April 2024

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Upcoming Sermons

March 31– EASTER

Christ is Risen,
 He is Risen Indeed!

April 7-

Catching the Vision:
 Restoring God's World,
 Part I (Nehemiah 1)

April 14-

Catching the Vision:
 Restoring God's World,
 Part II (Nehemiah 2)

April 21-

Catching the Vision:
 Restoring God's World,
 Part III (Nehemiah 3)

April 28-

Lead Us Not into
 Temptation but Deliver Us
 from the Evil One
 (Matthew 6:9-13)

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

“Life is a gift, and the giver is good” is a line from a worship song titled “Life is a gift”. This line is going through my mind as I write this note to you. I am grateful to God for the gift of life and my Savior Jesus Christ who rescued me from the kingdom of darkness and brought me into the kingdom of light. Though this life has challenges and troubles of its own, the Lord has promised to be with us through it all. May you find peace and encouragement in God's promises for today and until we reach home where there is no more pain, suffering, and death. In the meantime, as we are here on earth, let's make the best of this gift of life for the kingdom and glory of God.

In our Church Council meeting on March 12, 2024, we talked about the current state of our church as well as envisioning the future of Grace Church and especially how we can take faithful steps toward fulfilling Christ's mission through Grace Methodist Church. It is a matter that we all need to be taking before the Lord in prayer to seek God's direction. So, on behalf of the Church Council, I am inviting you all to mark your calendars for a day of fasting prayer on Maundy Thursday, March 28th, to pray for our church and seek God's direction for the future of the church. You can choose to fast one meal or two meals that day or pray without fasting. We will meet as a church together in the sanctuary on March 28th at 5:30 PM to pray and break our fast with the soup supper scheduled for 6 PM in the Great Hall.

Sunday, April 7th is the other date that you can mark on your calendar. On April 7th we will have a meal together after the service where I will make a presentation on envisioning the future of Grace Church. Let's catch the vision God has through Grace church to expand Christ's kingdom in the city of Decatur, the surrounding communities, and the world. I encourage you to keep praying and participate with the congregation on these two important days.

Now I want to give you a heads-up for a Bible overview & Inductive Bible Study (IBS) workshop/seminar that I am starting on April 9, Tuesday, at 5:30 PM. It will be an eight-week-long weekly event in April and May. Please feel free to invite others from outside the church too.

I have designed this workshop/seminar to provide a systematic understanding of the Bible. At this workshop/seminar, we will discuss different worldviews and focus on why we need a Biblical worldview. We will have time to learn about how the books in the Bible written by human authors are the Word of God; and how to read and understand different genres and literature found in the Bible. We will also learn to read the Bible inductively, exploring the original context, and how the Word of God applies to us today in our context so that we can experience the transforming power of the Word of God in our lives.

Since I told you about the upcoming Bible Overview & IBS seminar, let me also tell you that I have been invited to teach in the School of Biblical Studies overseas via Zoom. I take this teaching opportunity as an extension of our church's overseas mission to equip missionaries in the Word of God to carry on the mission of Christ on earth.

(CONTINUE ON PG 3)

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.

March 24	Luke 1	April 14	John 1
March 25	Luke 2	April 15	John 2
March 26	Luke 3	April 16	John 3
March 27	Luke 4	April 17	John 4
March 28	Luke 5	April 18	John 5
March 29	Luke 6	April 19	John 6
March 30	Luke 7	April 20	John 7

March 31	Luke 8	April 21	John 8
April 1	Luke 9	April 22	John 9
April 2	Luke 10	April 23	John 10
April 3	Luke 11	April 24	John 11
April 4	Luke 12	April 25	John 12
April 5	Luke 13	April 26	John 13
April 6	Luke 14-15	April 27	John 14

April 7	Luke 16-17	April 28	John 15
April 8	Luke 18-19	April 29	John 16
April 9	Luke 20	April 30	John 17
April 10	Luke 21	May 1	John 18
April 11	Luke 22	May 2	John 19
April 12	Luke 23	May 3	John 20
April 13	Luke 24	May 4	John 21

DISCIPLESHIP

Worry – What Is It Good For?
Absolutely Nothing
By Carol Perry

The last few weeks I've noticed myself worrying about a lot of things. Some that are out of my control and others I think I should control. But worry does nothing to solve these problems. In fact, we are told in Scripture not to worry. Not to be anxious about anything.

In my worry, I thought about that and prayed to surrender the worries I had to God. The most wonderful thing began to happen. I stopped worrying. The problems aren't solved, but I am not concerned about them like I was. It's good to know in God's timing He'll take care of anything I leave at the cross.

I wanted to encourage you that God does answer our prayers when we have things come up that make us worry. The medical test that didn't come out like we'd hoped and now requires doing things that we aren't sure about. Children who don't show up when they are told to be home at a certain time. The job loss we didn't see coming, or maybe we did but hoped it wouldn't happen to us. Running out of money before the end of the month. There are so many things in this life that can cause us to worry.

God's Word has so many scriptures on what to do with that worry. Like in Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This is one of my favorite go to verses. I used to think, "don't be anxious" but when I've stopped worrying and give things to God, anxiety leaves and that peace the verses talk about does come over me. Jesus does guard our hearts and minds when we let Him be in control.

Surrendering is hard, but we must if we want to get rid of our worries. Surrendering means letting go of control. Letting go of the need to control is one of the hardest things to do as we do not like feeling vulnerable. We are under the impression that if we control things, we avoid suffering and everything goes our way.



April 2024



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

April 7th- Lunch Served after Service with Dr. Paul's presentation of Vision for our church growth.			APRIL 9th Dr. Paul's Bible Overview/ Inductive Seminar starts. And will continue every Tuesday 5:30-7:00			
	1 OFFICE CLOSED 7:00 pm –NA Narcotics	2 6:30am –Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	3 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm – Anchored Kids 5:00 pm –Men's Bible Study	4	5	6
7 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 –Adult SS	8 6:00 pm– Bible Study 7:00 pm –NA Narcotics Anonymous	9 6:30am – Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	10 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm – Anchored Kids 5:00 pm –Men's Bible Study	11	12	13
14 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 - Adult SS	15 6:00 pm– Bible Study 7:00 pm –NA Narcotics Anonymous	16 6:30am – Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	17 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm – Anchored Kids 5:00 pm –Men's	18	19	20
21 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 - Adult SS	22 6:00 pm– Bible Study 7:00 pm –NA Narcotics Anonymous	23 6:30am – Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering	24 10:00am - Sisters in Christ 4:30 pm – Anchored Kids 5:00 pm –Men's Bible Study	25	26	27
28 9:30 -Worship Service 10:45 - Adult SS	22 6:00 pm– Bible Study 7:00 pm –NA Narcotics Anonymous	30 6:30am –Men's Bible study 4:00pm-Prayer Gathering				



WAKE-UP CALL

Best Thing Since Sliced . . . by Susan Kent

Reprinted with permission.

“Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:47-53)

Consider this:

What is the best idea you’ve ever heard? Apparently, in 1928, the Chillicothe Baking Company had a great idea and they became the first company to sell sliced bread. Afterward, people used this moment as a benchmark and a way to denote a great idea or innovation. As much as I appreciate this improvement in the world, I am confident in saying that Jesus is the best thing since before sliced bread!

When we began this week, we learned that grain was essential to the daily life of the Israelites. It was the center of their existence. Without bread, many of them would not be able to survive. While I would venture to guess that most of us do not worry about surviving each day, what do you believe you need in your life? What is essential for your daily life?

Psychologist Abraham Maslow created a list of needs every human being has from those essentials to security, belonging, esteem, and purpose. Many of us tend to worry because we have our own list of what we need to be satisfied. We worry because we don’t believe

God will provide enough of what we have decided we need. That’s a keyword: enough. Will we have enough? We are worried because we believe we’ll end up with the least, but the truth is we can trust Jesus because He is not only enough, He is the best.

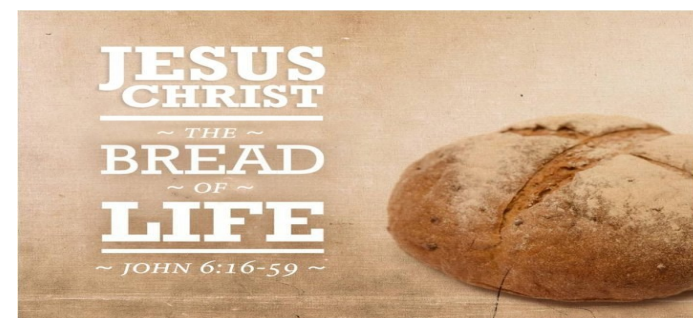
In the Gospel of John, Jesus fed more than five thousand people by multiplying bread. He took the bare essentials of a few loaves and fish and He provided all they needed plus baskets of leftovers. The next day the crowd went in search of Jesus on the other side of the lake and they asked Him for a sign like the manna which was given to their ancestors in the desert. Jesus responds that He is the bread they need, but it is more than the bare minimum essentials. Jesus is enough because He is the best and He can multiply all things to be not only enough, but to be overflowing. Is there an area in your life where you do not feel you have enough physically? Maybe it’s money or a job or a home. Is there a place in your spiritual life where you do not feel you have enough knowledge of the Bible or experience in prayer? Surrender your worry to Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life and the Creator of all. We do not have to worry that God is not enough for our lives. He is all we need.

The Prayer:

Lord, why do we worry? You are everything we need. You are the one who knows how to provide, so today we lay down our fish and our bread, we surrender all we have and we trust You to be all we need. Amen.

The Questions:

Why do you think Jesus made a point of stressing that, like manna, He came down from heaven? How does that increase your trust in God? What does it mean to you that Jesus is the best and most important need we have? How will you re-prioritize the list of needs you have in your mind?



But in reality, we cannot control what is outside of us and thus we create more suffering. We can only control how we react to things, how we think, and how we feel. By strengthening our faith in God, we will find it easier to let go and trust completely in our Creator.

When we surrender to God and let go, we feel relieved and have a sense of freedom. Even though it sounds scary, it’s extremely liberating as it frees our minds from negative thinking, doubts, and speculative fear.

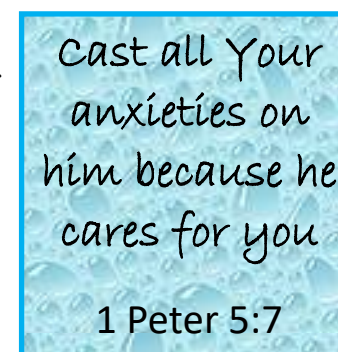
Scripture says in James 4:10 “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” When we Surrender, the Lord is in control. He will lift us up, maybe not out of the circumstances but through them until they are over. God is with us all the time. And we know He has good plans for those who fear Him. “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5) Knowing that God’s ways are higher than ours and that he will lead on right paths is comforting, I think anyway. Letting Him have our problems and worries keeps us from straying on our own paths and taking back control.

I hope that pointing out some Scriptures to turn to helps when you worry and need to surrender it to God. Because worry is good for absolutely nothing.

I will leave you with a prayer:

Loving God, please grant the person reading this peace of mind and calm for their troubled heart. When their soul is like a turbulent sea, and they can’t seem to find their balance. When they stumble and worry through situations. Give them the strength and clarity of mind to find their purpose and walk the path you’ve laid out for them. Lift them up so not to strike their foot on a stone. Be the light unto their path. Help them to see your good plans for them to grow their trust in you. Forgive them of their unbelief. In Jesus name. Amen.



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1– Pastor Paul message)

By the time you read this note, we will be in the Holy Week. I hope you will join us for the Holy Week services, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday, and celebrate the joyous and victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus on Easter Sunday morning. Our church office has prepared an invitational card for Easter Sunday along with the schedule for the Holy Week services, soup supper, and Easter Hot Breakfast. Use this invitation card as an outreach opportunity to invite, family, friends, and neighbors to church and help them connect with their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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.

Remember: You 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.

It is my joy, privilege, and honor to serve Christ Jesus alongside you all.
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



Dr. Paul is teaching an online class to missionaries overseas on Zoom.

EDUCATION

From your Christian Education team....

On March 4, volunteers from Grace had the opportunity to be guest readers at Hope Academy for Read Across America Day! We were joined by several others who we met through our Monday morning prayer at Hope. We read to Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades. We are so thankful for our partnership with Hope, and loved spending time with these kiddos. At Anchored Kids in March, we learned about Peter's denial, and also learned about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We memorized John 20:31, which says, "But these are written so that you may believe



that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you will have life in His name".



Put Wednesday, May 8, on your calendar for the Anchored Kids Awards Night. It will be at 5:30 in the Sanctuary. The kids will receive their awards for the year, and will also be ready to sing a few songs for us!



GRACE FAMILY

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO PRAY!

Every Monday morning at 7:45 AM for the past few years, a group of Grace Church members along with a few teachers, administrators and interested parents and grandparents gather at Hope Academy to pray. Grace has partnered with Hope Academy for about five years. We provide them with classroom supplies, snacks for the teachers and staff, volunteers needed for reading to students or other specific events. Most importantly, we gather once a week to pray with them and for them. The city, the state, the federal government can create guidelines and pass multiple laws to improve our education system and to keep students safe, but the power of prayer has always and will continue to prove the most powerful way of impacting our schools in a positive direction. We would love for you to join us. We pray for about 15 minutes. We greet the students and the teachers as they enter the building. And we walk away knowing that the Holy Spirit had been invited into the building and bless those who enter its doors.



REPORT FROM ANN IRWIN -

Operation Enduring Support mailed 104 Easter Care Packages Tuesday March 19th. This group is part of Grace Methodist and receives donations of time and money and goods from our congregation. Your support is sending a message to our deployed military that you haven't forgotten them and you care. There are so many of our deployed who do not receive support from home. This packing day we had 13 members of Grace helping to pack the boxes. We need to also pray for these young men and women who have put their personal lives on hold to serve their country and keep America free. Thank You for all of your dedication to this project.



ECONOMY SHOP

WOW!! our new flooring is done. It looks like a new store!

This wouldn't have been possible without the Lord's blessing. From receiving a donation from the Grace Methodist Foundation to the increase in sales so that we could put aside money and continue our monthly commitments to our church and our local charities. We are also blessed by you, our congregation. A huge thank you to those who helped with this project; the men who moved all the fixtures out and back in (in the rain!), to those who helped with packing and unpacking. So, come in and check us out! Our spring clothing and shoes are out, lots of beautiful jewelry and home decor just waiting for a new home. If you're looking for a cheerful, inviting place to volunteer, we need you! There's opportunities to work 2 1/2 or 5 hour shifts. Just contact Judy Madding 217/864-4522 or Marj Cline 217-855-5060. We are currently taking donations Monday through Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 10-3.

See you at the shop!

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

HE IS RISEN, INDEED!

Yes, He is risen and ascended and He is coming for all that believe. As we look forward to that glorious day, let us be thankful that we have Jesus Christ in our lives. As we celebrate Easter with friends and family, I pray that all is well with you and you feel safe and secure in the Lord's arms.

PRAYER WALK

Come join the prayer warriors at Hope Academy. They are there every Monday morning at 7:45 to pray for and with the teachers and students. In addition to that prayer time, they also meet in the sanctuary at 4:00 on Tuesday afternoons for additional prayers. COME WORSHIP THE LORD.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

These greetings are for all that are homebound or in care facilities.
Florence Kruzan –April 6

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

LITTLER RED WAGON

I am pleased to see that some of you are still donating to the little red wagon. These items are greatly appreciated by the ones that go to Oasis. I am so proud to be a member of a church that is so generous and caring to others. They always open the door for me and thank me for your generosity.

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

Living under God's love and protection,
Mary Grace

FINANCIALS

Summary financial Information :As of 2/29/24

YTD Income	\$90,362.74
YTD Expenses	\$121,887.97
Net Income (deficit)	(\$31,525.23)