

Joyful Notes



Reflections from the Pastor

“Believe It or Not, Grace Takes Practice”

The other day as I was preparing to run some errands, my dear wife Vicki was listening to a webinar on speaker. At one point the person leading the course commented, “Believe it or not, Grace Takes Practice.” Over the past few days I was wrestling with what I would write about this month -- that is until I heard the above phrase. I said to myself, “that’s it, I am going to write about grace.”

Grace is a word that gets thrown around a lot. Whether inside or outside the church, we hear the word grace used in many ways. In the example I overheard, the leader was speaking about the ways we can learn to be gracious toward ourselves. In this context the person was referring to grace in terms of self-affirmation, or seeing the value of oneself in the world. This fits very well with the spirit of the word grace, which means seeing grace as a gift, as a way of giving ourselves the gift of favor and acceptance, which is not based on achievement. It’s not something we can earn or receive through the fulfillment of certain requirements. Whether we experience grace from others, or show grace to others, what we are describing is the gift of loving acceptance, favor, goodwill, mercy, and understanding for everyone.

Dan Jeremy, from the 12th century, passes along his “Summary of God’s Grace,” when he writes, “The gospel is all about God’s grace through Jesus Christ, which is why Paul calls it ‘the gospel of the grace of God.’ (Acts 20:24) and ‘the word of his grace.’ (Acts 14:3). The gospel of the grace of God is the message



everyone needs. The word of grace is proclaimed from every page of the Bible and ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ. The last verse of the Bible summarizes the message from Genesis to Revelation: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.” (Rev. 22:21) It is through Jesus ‘we have all received grace upon grace’ (John 1:16)—the gratuitous and undomesticated grace of God.”

Two mystics from the medieval era described their own experiences of the transforming impact of God’s

(continued on page 2)

Come
Worship
With Us

**Join us for
Sunday
Worship
at 11:30 a.m.
in person
and via
Zoom!**

...

Laitry Session of Annual Conference Tuesday, June 14th at 6:30 pm

Mary Frances will have the doors open at church for anyone that wants to join the webinar. She will be projecting on the overhead for viewing.

...

Open Session of the Annual Conference is Sunday, June 19th

...

Annual Conference is Thursday, June 23rd from 9 am to 7 pm

Pastor's Message - (continued from page 1)

grace in their lives. Catherine of Siena, an Italian Mystic of the 14th century, prayed that God would give to her a *"perfect love of her fellow human beings."* As a result, Catherine had a vision where *"the Lord appeared to her, removed her heart, and gave her his own heart."* Hildegard of Bingen, from the 12th century, saw God as *"a flaming light of marvelous brightness, like a flame that warms, even as the rays of the sun strike the earth."* Her life was always dictated *"by inward commands,"* and the focus of her life was to help people to *"know the ways of the Lord."*

When it comes to grace, if our goal is the warm and loving acceptance of all people, creating a church and world where *"all are welcome, always,"* then we need practice. The experience of the deep care and kindness expressed to us through God's grace can be difficult to embrace. The expression of that loving grace toward ourselves or

others does not come naturally. Henri Nouwen has a way of helping us to begin this journey of practicing grace by inviting us to consider a series of questions to guide our steps. The questions are as follows: *"Did I offer peace*



today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are real questions." If that sounds a little scary or intimidating, maybe it is important to think of a question that will help

us to answer the others. We can first ask, *"how am I to be let myself be loved by God?"* In other words, *"how can I allow myself to receive God's grace?"*

I believe it's the answer to this question that can put us in touch with the basic truth and the gift of God's grace. It becomes the basis for applying this loving presence in the world toward ourselves and others. This grace is radically unpredictable, life affirming, and incalculably important. It is the gift of unconditional love, favor, and acceptance. Let's practice.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all."

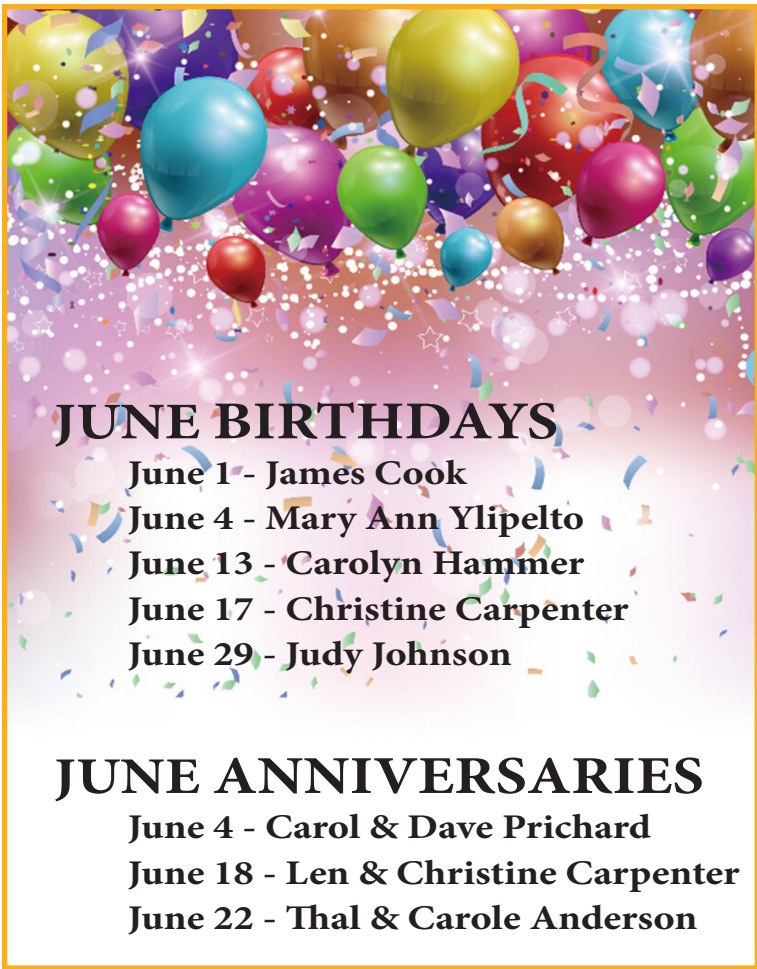
*Blessings-
Pastor Michael*

Breakfast for the Soul

I meet God in the morning and go with Him through the day
Then in the stillness of the night before sleep comes I pray
That God will just take over all the problems I could not solve,
And in the peacefulness of sleep my cares would all dissolve.
So when I open up my eyes to greet another day
I'll find myself renewed in strength and there will open up a way
To meet what seemed impossible for me to solve alone,
And once again I'll be assured
I am never on my own.

by Helen Steiner Rice





JUNE BIRTHDAYS
 June 1 - James Cook
 June 4 - Mary Ann Ylipelto
 June 13 - Carolyn Hammer
 June 17 - Christine Carpenter
 June 29 - Judy Johnson

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES
 June 4 - Carol & Dave Prichard
 June 18 - Len & Christine Carpenter
 June 22 - Thal & Carole Anderson

GOD LOVES AND UNDERSTANDS

It's amazing and incredible,
 But it's as true as it can be,
 God loves and understands us all
 And that means you and me—
 His grace is all sufficient
 For both the young and old,
 For the lonely and the timid,
 For the brash and for the bold—
 His love knows no exceptions,
 So never feel excluded,
 No matter what your past has been,
 Trust God to understand,
 And no matter what your problem is
 Just place it in His Hand—
 For in all of our unloveliness
 This great God loves us still,
 He loved us since the world began,
 And what's more, He always will!

by Helen Steiner Rice



IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

*When someone
 does a kindness
 It always seems
 to me
 That's the way God up in Heaven
 Would like us all to be.
 For when we bring some pleasure
 To another human heart
 We have followed in His footsteps
 And we've had a little part
 In serving Him who loves us
 For I'm very sure it's true
 That in serving those around us
 We serve and please Him too.*

by Helen Steiner Rice

**Happy
 Father's
 Day**

SUNDAY, JUNE 19TH



**Astoria First United
Methodist Church**

**1076 Franklin Avenue
Astoria, OR 97103**

Request Service Requested

We are open for worship services each Sunday at 11:30 am in person and on Zoom.

As Pastor Michael is available to respond to pastoral care needs by phone 541-499-9703 or in person.

Bishop: *Rev. Elaine Stanovsky*

District Superintendent: *Rev. Wendy Woodworth*

Pastor: *Rev. Michael Avila*

Administrative Assistant: *Lynette Vollmer*

Astoria Lay Leaders: *Chuck Albright & Sue Hicks*

Finance Chairperson: *Sue Hicks*

Lay Member to Annual Conference: *Mary Frances Gunn*

Visit us on Facebook!

Web site: www.unitedmethodistastoria.org

Church Office: 503.325.5454