

(RE)LEARNING

*HOW TO READ
THE BIBLE*



JESUS
WANTS TO
SAVE
CHRISTIANS

Grace United Methodist Church

January 31, 2021

OUR WELCOMING STATEMENT

God's love is for all and God's grace is present in all creation. God's spirit draws us into community. We are filled with genuine care and love for one another.

Honoring the diversity of our faith journeys, our welcome is extended to all – people of all races, sexes, ethnic backgrounds, generations, physical and mental abilities, economic conditions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. No matter who you are, no matter where you are in your life, you are welcome here.

We are all invited to bless this church with our love, our presence, and our participation.

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GREETING ONE ANOTHER

Call to Worship

From the beginning, all life has been connected.

There is a holy thread that weaves our lives together.

At times, we hide from this truth. Other times it is hidden from us.

It gets buried deep down beneath greed and isolation.

It is forgotten when fear comes close.

But there is a place where we find ourselves in each other.

A place where every living thing is valued.

We come to it on occasion. In brief and fleeting moments.

It is our home in the life of God. Our place of origin and return.

Let us go there together. Love has shown us the

OPENING PRAYER

Beloved One, in times of uncertainty, you are the ground that steadies us.

When nothing feels stable or secure, the knowledge of your abiding presence is our strength and our comfort. Remind us, O God, that we need not look far for you. As close as our breath, our neighbor, and every creaturely thing - you reach for us. Thanks be to you. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 8:26-38

HYMN

UMH 400

"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

SERMON

Pastor Nate Nims

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

Just as God dwells in us, we dwell in God. We share space together in the life of God where all have their needs met and none go unnoticed. We confess that we often act as if it were not so. We search high and low for you while you wait for us in the face of our neighbors and the body of the earth. In all your many forms, you come to us with gifts of grace and invitations to live in and share your love. May our lives be a sign of our gratitude as we witness to every holy encounter. All this we pray through Christ who taught us to pray saying, **Our God (Father, Mother, Creator) who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses**

as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

OFFERING

If you haven't made your pledge for 2021 yet, you can do so at:

<https://gracedesmoines.org/2021-stewardship-campaign/>

CLOSING HYMN

UMH 351

"Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior"

Member Updates

Grant McCollum has moved to the Urbandale Care Center for physical therapy following his recent hospitalization. He expects to be there for a few weeks. Cards and letters may be sent to Grant at Urbandale Care Center, 4614 84th Street Room #306, Urbandale IA 50322. He would love to hear from his Grace friends.

If you would like to share an update in our weekly email or the worship bulletin, please let the church office know

Please continue to keep your Grace friends and family in your prayers. Think about the persons that you often sat by in the sanctuary or the people you'd share a cup of coffee with. Could you send them a letter this weekend or even make a call to check in on one another? If you need help finding a phone number or address, please contact the church office.

Guide to Prayer and Study: February 1-6

Monday, February 1

Read - Matthew 22:36-40

Notice - Asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus chose not one but two. The first was Deuteronomy 6:4: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind." But he added Leviticus 19:18: "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself." Jesus said the point of all other truths is to lead us to love God and neighbor more fully. God wants us to show contagious love to all we know. Jesus said every key Bible principle, all the truths we know about what God wants, "depend" on the two commands he quoted. What do you believe made these two commands so foundational in Jesus' thinking, teaching, and living? Can you recall any time when some belief you held led you to love God or some of your neighbors less, maybe even without realizing it? That second command can be challenging. Loving others the way we love ourselves is based on how God loves us—never giving up, no matter what. Our humanity makes it hard for us to love ourselves or others with God's unwarranted love with no hesitation. But God calls us to move toward that, for our own sake and the sake of others. What has stopped you or made it hard for you to love yourself or someone else persistently? How might you love more fully?

Pray - Gracious God, thank you for loving me unconditionally. Help me to recognize the moments in my life when I can relentlessly love those around me. Amen.

Tuesday, February 2

Read - 1 John 4:16-21

Notice - John Wesley, Methodism's founder, preached a sermon on April 21, 1777 that quoted John and invited all Christ-followers, "Let us provoke all [people], not to enmity and contention, but to love and good works; always remembering those deep words... 'God is love; and [those] that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in [them]!'" *Why would John say, "Perfect love drives out fear"? 1 John 4:20 said, "Those who say, 'I love God' and hate their brothers or sisters are liars." Do you agree that it is often fear that leads us to hate other people? Why would hating others block any genuine love for God? Can you think of practical ways to let God's perfect love move you in the direction of acting in love toward "others," even if you think they deserve fear and distrust rather than love?

Pray - Jesus, you embodied God's love for me. Now you call me to embody your love as I deal with other people, even people I may not like, may even fear. Grow your love in my heart. Amen.

* From Wesley's sermon "On Laying The Foundation Of The New Chapel, Near The City-Road, London" at <http://www.godrules.net/library/wsermons/wsermons132.htm>.

Wednesday, February 3

Read - Ezekiel 34:1-8, 11-12, Luke 15:1-7

Notice - Jesus, God in the flesh, came to this planet on very real rescue mission. Drawing from the image in Ezekiel 34, he told a story about a shepherd who lost one sheep from his flock. That was only 1% of the flock, but the shepherd cared deeply about any lost sheep. He dropped everything, searched until he found that sheep—and felt great joy when he found it. Jesus' critics thought he should write off the human "lost sheep" (Luke 15:2), but Jesus in fact searched tirelessly for them. "[Ezekiel's] metaphor goes beyond the normal responsibilities of making sure that the sheep are protected and fed. Instead it focuses on the remedial duties, caring for the sick and finding the lost. These equate to the need for kings to bring about justice for alienated and disenfranchised people." * What are some of the ways you can actively support and work for justice for alienated or disenfranchised people around you?

Pray - Jesus, thank you that you've never seen me (or anyone) as a "disposable asset," as someone who doesn't matter. Give me your heart for everyone in your human family. Amen.

* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture (Kindle Locations 190424-190426). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Thursday, February 4

Read - Romans 13:8-10

Notice - Paul sent this letter to Roman house churches (there were no big cathedrals in his day). Some were mainly Jewish; others mostly Gentile. Their standards of "righteousness" varied (cf. Romans 14:1-15:13). It was easy for them to criticize each. Paul said the purpose of God's law or rules is to help us love. "Love doesn't do anything wrong to a neighbor" was a big challenge to people who disagreed. It was (and is) vital, because "Whoever loves another person has fulfilled the Law." How might ugly religious conflicts (e.g. the Salem witch trials, the Inquisition) have been different if Christians had always aimed to fulfill the law by loving? How can you stand for truths that matter to you without acting in unloving ways toward those who disagree? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the inner qualities (that may not come naturally) that help you live out the law of love.

Pray - Jesus, "love is what fulfills the Law" sometimes feels too easy to me. Until, that is, I try to do it—then I realize how high and hard a standard that is. Teach me how to love the way that you love. Amen.

Friday, February 5

Read - Matthew 9:35-38, Luke 19:1-10

Notice - Jesus did many admirable, valuable things during his ministry on earth. Jesus healed the sick, broke down barriers of prejudice and exclusion, taught people how to live better lives, and challenged religious hypocrisy. Yet all that grew from Jesus' central mission, as Jesus said, he came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus yearned for God to "send out workers into his harvest field." To what extent do you think "troubled and helpless... sheep without a shepherd" expresses the spiritual state of your neighbors, co-workers, even some people you know in church? Are you willing to become one of the workers Jesus wished for? What abilities and resources has God given you that you can use to help reach troubled, helpless people with the good news of Jesus?

Pray - Jesus, thank you for coming "to seek and save the lost," including me. Guide me to the ways I can join you in doing that great, world-changing work. Amen.

Saturday, February 6

Read - Colossians 3:12-14, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Notice - Paul was emphatically practical in his letters to the Christians in Ephesus and Corinth. He would have grown up reciting the Shema, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus, Paul's Lord, said that was the greatest commandment, and added, "You must love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). The next logical question for Paul, like Christ's followers ever since, was, "What does it look like to love my neighbor?" These were his answers. It looks like being humble—not thinking of yourself more highly than others. It looks like being gentle—take a deep breath if you feel angry, speak carefully. It looks like being patient—while waiting, focus on God instead of yourself. Love requires compassion (suffering with others), kindness (honor and consideration) and forgiveness to all God's children. As you read this list of loving actions, how do you feel? Great? Guilty? Condemned? If you're not perfectly living this list, remember: none of us are. Start with, how can you be more loving this week? Instead of trying to grow in all areas at once, choose one characteristic Paul lists and focus on living into a new way of loving. And loving attitudes and actions are both individual and public, local and general. Think more broadly than just yourself. What can your family, your community, your church, your city, your state, your nation do to be more loving to people you've never met? How can you join in God's work to extend divine love to all people?

Pray - Jesus, I want to love all my neighbors, everywhere. Help me start close to home and guide me as I expand my vision to be more and more like your vast, world-changing vision. Amen.

From now until March 1, the Iowa United Methodist Foundation is accepting scholarship applications for the 2021-2022 school year. Our webpage includes links to apply, as well as information about each scholarship and its requirements. We offer more than just Methodist scholarships, so please forward this information to the high school senior in your life! <https://iumf.org/scholarships/>



Grace currently has a membership to Amplify, a media ministry of the United Methodist Publishing House. You can look at free options at <https://amplifymedia.com/>, even without the Grace “code” for our membership. If you would like to look at other content, please email bob.dean@iaumc.net for information on how to access all the materials with Grace’s code.



We have regularly scheduled live-streams on Facebook and YouTube. You can also always catch our videos at gracedesmoines.org. Our new schedule of live stream events is:

Sunday - Worship at 10:15 am on the GraceDesMoines Facebook and YouTube pages

Tuesday - Guide to Prayer and Study at 9 am

Thursday - Spiritual Practices at 9 am



2021 offering envelopes will be mailed to the homes of those who use them in the coming week. If you do not currently use envelopes, but would like to start, please call the office at 515.255.2131 and we will set you up with a set. You will have the option of either monthly or weekly envelopes.

WORSHIP LEADER: Rev. Nate Nims;

RESOURCES USED IN THIS SERVICE:

Opening Prayer from enfleshed (www.enfleshed.com.)

All music used under OneLicense A-727197

Guide to Prayer and Study modified from cor.org

† In hymns, prayers, and liturgies, use language that makes worship meaningful, enriching, and inclusive.



Grace United Methodist Church

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Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter at GraceDesMoines

In-person services are suspended for the time being, Please join us online for worship.

Watch the livestream of the 10:15 am service on the GraceDesMoines Facebook page

or on our YouTube channel..