

CONNECTION

What Kind of Community?

~Pastor Mark Johnson

In February, the elder board introduced a clarified vision statement to help define our target and measure our church's progress toward fullness in Christ.

The clarified vision of Grace: **"We are seeking to become a community of generous lovers of God and others as wholehearted disciples of Jesus."**

Over the next months we will be further explaining what we mean by these terms. In this article, I will expand on what we mean by the word community.

COMMUNITY – The experience of healthy, committed relationships built on love, unity and mutual service, each using their gifts to support and build one another up.

If we were to choose one bible passage to support our definition of community, it would be Ephesians 4:1-6. There are two phrases in this passage that undergird the experience we hope to uphold at Grace.



"Bearing with one another in love..." (v.2). A blessing of community is that we are not alone. When we have worked so hard to overcome a challenge, it is the community to which we turn and lift our arms in celebration. When we are on our knees in weakness due to discouragement or suffering, it is the community that comes along side and consoles and comforts. They join us in our triumph and cry with us in our sorrow because they love us and have walked with us in our journey.

"Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit..." (v.3). Our unity is reflected in the reality that there is "one body and one Spirit—just as we were called to the one hope that belongs to our call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (v.4-6). As such, we are eager to maintain



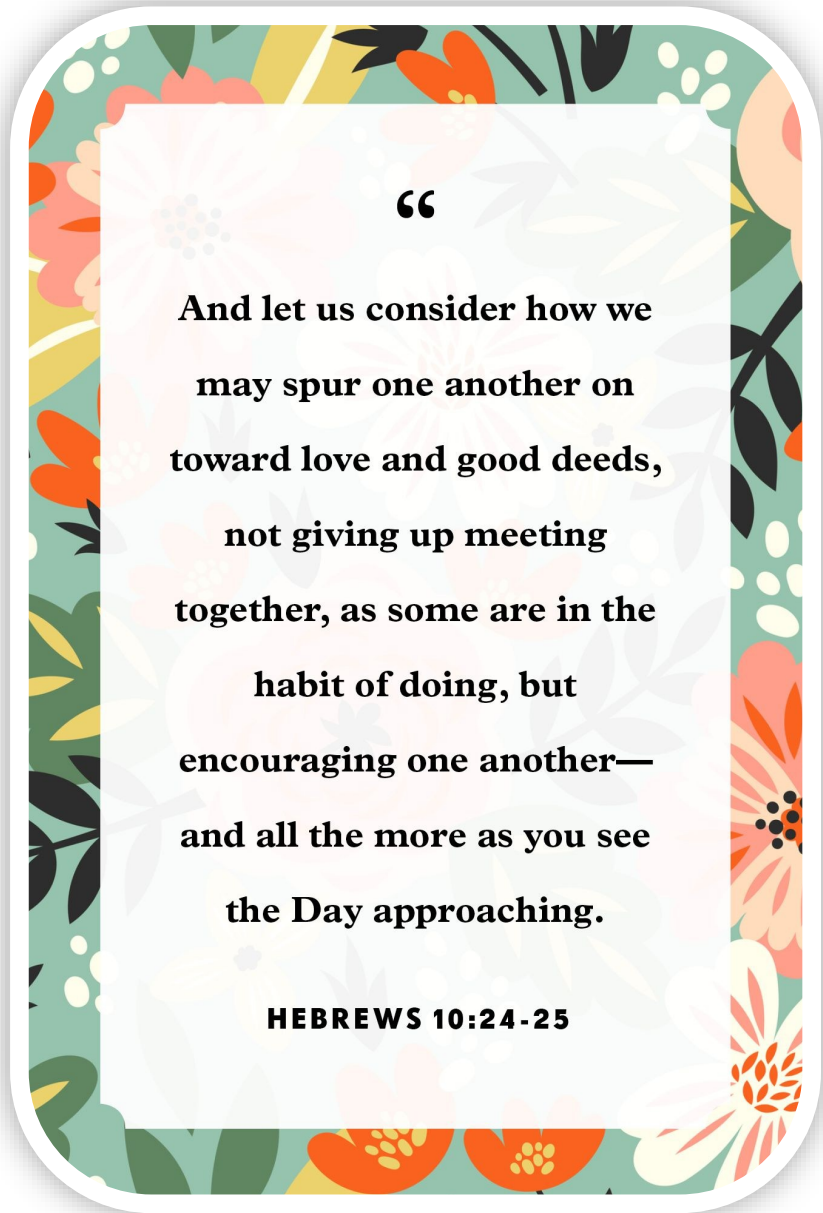
What Kind of Community? Continued

community though we are a diverse, multifaceted group of people.

Our eagerness is displayed in our honoring of one another in our differences, personalities and life experiences. We are patient with one another when we act out of our fear and woundedness and say hurtful things. We confess our fears and failures and repent when we wrong one another. In gentleness and humility, we forgive one another and are willing to do the hard work of moving toward reconciliation.

As a healthy community, we willingly sacrifice our own desires and needs at times in deference to one another and their needs. We use our own resources to build one another up until we all reach fullness in Christ.

If you are looking to join us in our mission toward community, the best way to begin is to be a part of a Growth Group. Growth Groups meet in homes throughout Amador and Calaveras counties for the purpose of growing in faith and community. Please visit our website or click on the “sign-ups” link in the Church Center APP to learn more.



Only One Life

The year was 1942, and a young woman—just a girl at the time—walked the same hallway every day on her way to class. There, painted on the wall in simple letters, was a phrase she barely noticed at first:

"Only one life, and it'll soon be passed."

At the time, she didn't think much of it. After all, life stretched out before her like an endless road. Summers felt never ending, and the idea of life passing quickly seemed like something really far-fetched. But time, as we all know, has a way of proving otherwise.

Now in her 80s, she told me her story, and it's never left me.

*"I thought I had all the time in the world," she said. "But life is short. Very short. And it passes so quickly. **What you do, you have written—you can't change it.**"*

She paused; her eyes filled with tears at the weight of the years she had lived. Clearly, she had made many mistakes when she was younger. She was trying to hide her disappointment, but I could see it behind her eyes.

"What seemed like endless time when I was younger is now behind me. And I've learned that we really do have only one life to live. It's one chance, one shot to make it count. There's no


going back, no second chances to do it all over again."

*"I used to think I'd have time to do my own thing first, and then later, I'd do God's will if I wanted," she admitted. "I thought if I followed Him, I might miss out on something. I didn't want to have Him in my life. But you know what? I found out that **the will of God is what makes you happy**. It's not something that takes away from you—it's what **gives you purpose**. He is so gracious. He has a plan for everyone—one chance, one life. If you follow Him, He'll guide you, protect you, and bless you."*

At this point I was captivated. I wanted to hear more how this woman had experienced God. What exactly in her life changed to make her want to follow Jesus?

"People say, 'You can't take it with you.' But that's simply not true," she said, her voice steady and sure. "In the book of Revelation, it says, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord... their deeds will follow them.' What you do for Christ, that's what lasts. That's what you take with you. Our deeds do indeed live on."

She spoke about her children, her grandchildren, and memories of what really mattered to her. She had stories of past experiences where she felt the hand of God. It was inspiring. Then she concluded with this statement:



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"It's not about what you own. It's about what you leave behind—the love you gave, the faith you lived. I don't want to leave behind just memories. I want to leave behind something eternal, something that follows me."

I asked her what she would say to someone who still thought they had all the time in the world.

She didn't hesitate.

"Don't wait. I've seen too many people who thought they had more time, but time ran out. They had plans, dreams, things they were 'going to do someday'—but someday never came. Life goes by fast. And in the end, only what's done for Christ will last."

"When you stand before God, it won't matter how much money you made, how many people knew your name, or what kind of house you lived in. The only thing that will matter is what you did for Him. And I promise you, nothing else will compare."

I finished my tea and thanked her for her time, but as I walked away, her words stayed with me. They echoed in my mind like that phrase on the wall she had seen so many years ago—only one life, and it'll soon be passed.

I couldn't shake the weight of it. How often do we assume we have more time? More

chances? More "somedays" to get things right? But life isn't a rehearsal. We don't get a second draft.

As I stepped outside, the cool air hit my face, and I found myself whispering a quiet prayer: *"Lord, let me live for what truly lasts, help me and my family and friends live deeply in Your will. I love You Lord, thank you."*



Praising God for a record-breaking collection of shoebox gifts!



The numbers are in! Your incredible efforts in 2024 yielded 11,927,439 Gospel Opportunities that were packed, collected, and prayed over, including 10,574,805 in the U.S., an all-time high. Praise God! This milestone would not have been possible without the collective sacrifice and dedication of our Connect Volunteers.

Because of your commitment 11,927,439 children will have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and know Jesus. Millions of these boys and girls will go on to complete The Greatest Journey discipleship program, learning from faithful Ministry Partners in their communities about how to follow Christ and share the Gospel with friends and family.

We praise God for providing an army of Connect Volunteers who serve with extraordinary faith and dedication. Think back to every phone call, every Area Team meeting, every hour labored during National Collection Week, your many

prayers, and everything else you and your Area Team accomplished in 2024. It was all worth it! God is using your passion, dedication, and faith to plant millions of seeds in over 100 countries this year, and we are grateful for your partnership in ministry.

Please continue to pray with us. Pray that God would prepare the heart of each shoebox recipient to respond to the Gospel in faith, embrace discipleship, and become a disciple-maker. Pray also for the safe delivery of shoebox gifts and the ministry of our National Leadership Teams and Regional Leadership Teams.

We eagerly anticipate seeing how God will advance His Kingdom through shoebox gifts this year. It is an honor to serve alongside you!

“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.” Romans 16:25-27, ESV



Bob and Lisa Margaron LTA Resource Center – Stockton



God's Faithfulness in Our Journey with LTA Resource Center.

During one of the most challenging periods of our ministry, we felt God's call to persevere and continue serving the Stockton community. Here's how His vision unfolded:

1. God placed a renewed calling on our hearts to remain in ministry in Stockton.
2. He inspired the name "Love Them All Resource Center" (LTA Resource Center) for this mission.
3. The nonprofit status for LTA, which we expected to take over a year, was granted in just three months.
4. We prayed for a facility, and God provided an affordable space with utilities included, enabling us to pay one year's rent upfront with the funds already in hand.
5. One of our supporters, Thrivent Financial stepped forward to sponsor a fundraising dinner, helping us build a financial foundation for the ministry.
6. Initially, we anticipated that Bob would work his second job for another six months to a year, but in December 2024, our Board of Directors confirmed LTA could now support his full-time salary. He resigned from his second job, effective January 31, 2025, to dedicate himself fully to LTA.
7. Throughout this journey, we have remained steadfast in their commitment to serving local schools, children, and families, as they have for over 30 years.

We are amazed at how God has worked through every step to make this vision a reality!

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Upcoming opportunities for our ladies at Grace



WOMEN'S MINISTRY



Living Your Best Life First Tuesday of the month, 6pm at Nancy Johnson's home. Single ladies of all ages join us for dinner, fellowship and fun



Thursdays at 3 for Tea March 6 & 13 join Martha Johnson in her home for tea and fellowship



Ladies Bible Study Tuesday mornings 9am at Grace Fellowship. Join us as Debbie King teaches ACTS & BEYOND.



Mission's Conference Weekend Ladies Luncheon Saturday, March 8 at 11:30am join us to hear Becca Hooper speak about International Evangelism Ministry and for a complimentary luncheon.

Ladies 18+! Join us at Redwood Christian Park for our annual Spring Women's Retreat April 25-27, 2025!



Scan QR code for details and registration!





Growth Group Scoop

Grow in Grace Grow in Fellowship

Growth Groups at Grace are a great way to deepen your faith in community with other believers! If you aren't already part of a group, this is a great time to join. We currently have openings in Pine Grove and Sutter Creek and are always looking for new hosts and facilitators (training provided!). We urge you to consider participating in this vital part of life at Grace. But don't just take my word for it... Listen to what a few of our participants have to say:

I love my growth group! It's where a lot of my growth really happens. Increased Biblical knowledge and superficial friendliness occurs every Sunday. But the support to live out my faith, putting that Biblical knowledge into practice, is found through close connections. Scripture tells us that "iron sharpens iron" and that we are to encourage one another and build each other up. Also to carry each other's burdens, to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, to suffer with those who suffer, to confess our sins to each

other and pray for each other, to speak kind words to those filled with anxiety, etc. How can we do all that if we are not spending more than superficial time together? It's within a small group that trust is earned, I feel safe to let down my mask and defenses, and where God uses each person to encourage, challenge, carry, hold accountable, spur, pray and love. With God as our common bond, scripture our foundation, and faithful time spent together, we have made our faith journey deeper, and yet easier, together.

~Regina Kuntz

Bob & I have been part of small groups in every church we've been at. We love the relationships built through small groups. When you have that small intimate group, you feel more comfortable to open up. The group is always supportive and

we appreciate that environment. It is helpful hearing other's ideas and insights when digging into Bible verses and digging deeper into the Sunday message.

~ Debbie Jackson

If you are interested in participating in a Growth Group, please sign up today through Church Center > Signups > Growth Groups 2024-2025.



CAPTURE THE MOMENT! WHY?

~Duke Foster

Have you thought about what a wonderful time this is? I know, you've got to be kidding? During these trying times, take inventory of your walk. What can you do to come out of this a stronger person for HIM?

Isn't it a wonderful thing to know that no matter what, we're in! We are HIS! OK, OK I get it but I've come to realize that I need to improve my prayer life and especially compassion. I've been reading and re-reading James these past few weeks and what really caught my attention was Charles Stanley's comments on *James 5: 15 & 16: And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man avails much.* Dr. Stanley hits on 6 points, 2 of which, I would like to expand on:

#1 Our prayers must flow from a heart filled with love, compassion and forgiveness

Our prayers fail if we have bitterness or anger. We need the love and compassion that Jesus had/has. Have you prayed about someone that you really resented? In hopes that God might grab him or her by the neck and pound some sense into them? Pretty dramatic huh? Stick with me. So, what's the answer when we have this resentment? It's found on our knees or flat on your back with outstretched arms appealing to God for His help to overcome your anger. You can't wing it or overcome these negative thoughts with out divine intervention. You've heard this one a million times but it's factual 'Let go and let God'. Let Him have it. Surrender.

Then there's compassion. Oh brother! Yep! You gotta 'walk in their moccasins'. I've never had a double mastectomy so how can I relate? It's getting away from ourselves and really listening to the other person with sincerity. I mean, don't try to patronize the other person.

Get real! Drain yourself of 'me, myself & I' thoughts. Sit with that person and really listen to him or her as if Jesus was sitting with you and then wanting you to give Him a report of the agony and grief that the other person is experiencing. Read that again – pretty humbling isn't it?

To be honest with you, it took me about 30 years to forgive a person in our family for what they did. I really don't have a remedy for this one other than the fact – again – that you can't do it alone and it will never happen without His help. He's the One you'll have to sit with and cry out to. Dump it on Him. It does help to have a close brother or sister to share your anger about another person and that person can help through prayer for you and with you. Don't go it alone.

#2 We must recognize that our prayers are the link between another person's need and God's inexhaustible resources.

Stanley goes on to say "Ask the Lord to reveal to you the true needs of a person, not just the superficial or symptomatic needs". This might take some intervention on your part to really get to the heart of the matter. For instance, what was their childhood like? What challenges to they face right now? What 'thorn in their side' are they carrying? I think you get my point.

Have you ever thought about being a link between that person and God? Heavy! We could throw scripture all day at that person (which they most likely already know) OR we can reach up to Him and reach out to them simultaneously. As for me, I can't do one without the other.

Soooo, what can you do to improve your relationship with Jesus and others?



Missions Conference Weekend

March 8-9

Featured Speakers



Dale Barrett
Full Life Ministries,
Haiti



Becca Hooper
International Evangelism
Ministry

Weekend Schedule:

Men's Breakfast—Saturday, March 8 @ 8:30am

Speaker: Dale Barrett, Full Life Ministries/Haiti

Women's Luncheon—Saturday, March 8 @ 11:30am

Speaker: Becca Hooper, International Evangelism Ministry

Missionary Interviews—Sunday, March 9 @ 9am

All Church Lunch—Sunday, March 9 after service

The Missions Board will be providing lunch for everyone right after the Missions Sunday Service.



2025

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Happy Anniversary

- David & Shelly Hartsuyker — 3/05
- David & Jane Borgh — 3/14
- Duke & Janet Foster — 3/16
- Les & Lucia Altermatt—3/20
- Darrell & Duranda Marchell— 3/28



“Grace expresses two complementary thoughts: God’s unmerited favor to us through Christ, and God’s divine assistance to us through the Holy Spirit.”

—Jerry Bridges

Our Vision:

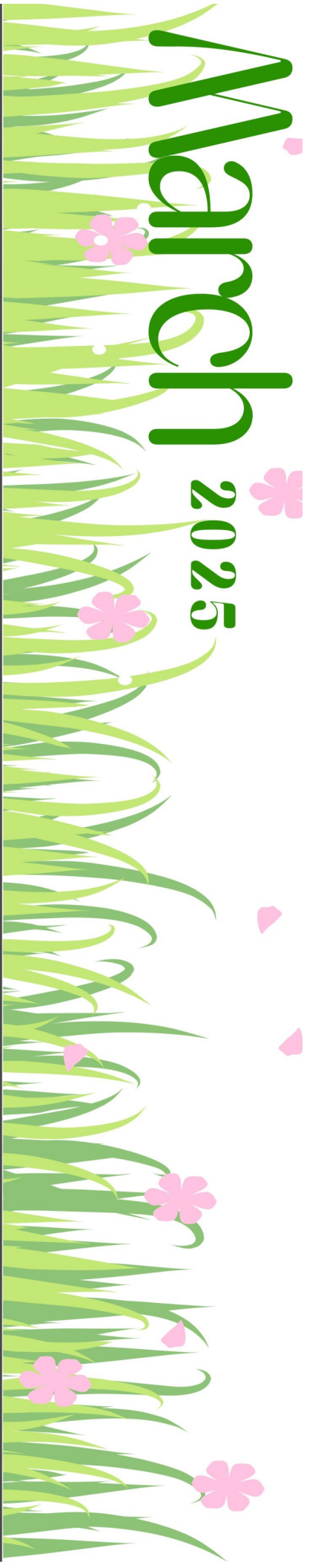
“We are seeking to become a community of generous lovers of God and others as wholehearted disciples of Jesus.”



For further details or questions on the “happenings at Grace” look on our WEBSITE (graceofamador.org), weekly BULLETIN, [Church Center App](#), or call the office.

Happy Birthday

- Lucas Brusatori 03/01
- Ketchum Dell’Orto 03/01
- Andrew Casas 03/01
- Patty Banks 03/02
- Jamie Gough 03/04
- Jim Fuente 03/07
- Elizabeth Larson 03/07
- Zach Larson 03/07
- Ethan Krieshok 03/08
- Charlie Throssel 03/10
- Mark Fine 03/11
- Josephine Caires 03/12
- Mel Hatch 03/14
- Sarah Throssel 03/14
- William Caires 03/14
-  Barbara Richardson 03/17
- Jeremiah Cavalli 03/18
- Caleb Peckinpugh 03/20
- Andrea Hauser 03/21
- Scott Larson 03/22
- Brennan Chadwick 03/27
- Debby Collins 03/27
- Nancy Voight 03/27
- Shelley Hartsuyker 03/29
- Makenzie Johnson 03/29
- Chris Larson 03/29
- Abigail Cranfill 03/30
- Rita Kerr 03/30



March 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2</p> <p>9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Women's Evening Discipleship 6pm</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30am Men's & Women's Bible Study Living Your Best Life 6-8pm</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's</p>	<p>7</p> <p>7am Men's prayer meeting</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Missions Weekend----- 8:30am Men's Breakfast 11:30am Women's Luncheon</p>
<p>9</p> <p>9 am Missionary Interviews 10:30 Worship Srv All Church Lunch after srv ----Missions Sunday</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Women's Evening Discipleship 6pm</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:30am Men's & Women's Bible Study</p>	<p>12</p> <p>6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's</p>	<p>14</p> <p>7am Men's prayer meeting</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>16</p> <p>9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 6-8pm YG Bowling & Burrito Blow Out</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Women's Evening Discipleship 6pm</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9:30am Men's & Women's Bible Study</p>	<p>19</p> <p>10am Rest Home Ministry 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>20</p> <p>7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7am Men's prayer meeting</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23</p> <p>9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Women's Evening Discipleship 6pm</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:30am Men's & Women's Bible Study</p>	<p>26</p> <p>6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:00am Men's Bible Study @ Duke Foster's</p>	<p>28</p> <p>7am Men's prayer meeting</p>	<p>29</p>
<p>30</p> <p>9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Women's Evening Discipleship 6pm</p>	<p>7-9pm Men's Ministry Book Study</p>	<p>7-9pm Men's Ministry Book Study</p>	<p>7-9pm Men's Ministry Book Study</p>	<p>7-9pm Men's Ministry Book Study</p>	<p>7-9pm Men's Ministry Book Study</p>