

Grace Notes

Community of Grace Presbyterian Church

April 2008

April Highlights

[“How Can I Help?”](#) This thoughtful article explores the difference between “helping” and “serving,” suggesting that it is through our service that God’s love is truly shared.

From the Pastor’s Desk:

[A Sermon Series](#). Pastor Marty outlines a new sermon series on a topic of continuing interest and confusion in our denomination: What do Presbyterians believe?

Our Church Community

[May Presbytery Meeting...Come & Volunteer](#). On Saturday, May 3 COG will host the Spring meeting of the Presbytery of Utah. Volunteers are needed to help host this event.

[April Open Forum: Operations](#). Sunday, April 27, immediately following the second service of worship, is the third of the year...this time on church operations. All members are invited.

[COG Member Recognized for Service](#). Millie Nielson recently received public recognition for her service to those in need.

[Session Notes](#). Here you will find a synopsis of the March Session meeting.

[April Calendar](#). The April church calendar is available at this link.

[Presbyterian Links](#). Here is a listing of helpful links for those who are interested in our denomination’s work at the national level, including what Presbyterians believe.

[Crossroads Items of the Month](#). In April the Crossroads Urban Center is looking for canned vegetables and fruit. Their most needed items are pots & pans, towels, new socks, and new underwear (all sizes).

Children & Youth

[Enthusiastically Serving!](#) Some thoughts on service from our 5th and 6th graders who served by supporting our Easter egg hunt.

[Vacation Bible Camp Scheduled](#). Reserve the dates now for our annual Vacation Bible Summer Camp: August 4 – 7. Consider also if you can serve in this ministry.

Youth Ministry:

[Loose Change to Loosen Chains](#). Youth will be leading the congregation to discover ways to make a difference in modern day slavery as part of our 30-Hour Fast

on May 3-4. This article provides background information on the extent of slavery in our world, and links to groups that are working to eliminate it.

[ACTS Kids Serve at Special Olympics Bowling Tournament](#) Our ACTS kids share their impressions of service with people with disabilities.

Adult & Family

[Making a Difference in Our Environment](#). This month we will partner with Tree Utah in a service project that contributes to protecting and honoring God's creation.

[April Drop-in Class:](#)

[Today's Slave Issues](#). Short video clips will augment a message of how children and others are being enslaved in today's world...and what we can do to stop it.

[AI Staggs Weekend](#). A brief synopsis of the AI Staggs weekend is provided along with a report on participation and a recommendation for the future of such events.

[April Prayer Calendar](#). Prayers from the hearts of our members. *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."* James 5:16

Presbyterian Women (PW)

[Spring Events](#). Circle your calendars, two spring events are described.



be with you.
As the Father has
sent me,
so I send you."

John 20:21, NRSV

"How Can I Help?"

by **Lorrie Gaffney**,
Children and Youth Director

As a person who recruits volunteers, that sounds like an ideal question to hear! People **do** want to be useful and have purposeful lives, and that is wonderful. But perhaps there is a deeper, more life-giving angle to that question.

Instead of "How can I help?", maybe the question God wants from us is, "How can I serve?"

Let's examine some differences between "helping" and "serving" as described by Rachel Naomi Remen, author of *My Grandfather's Blessing*. Ms. Remen suggests that "helping" is based upon inequality. You either help someone who you feel is inadequate – someone in need of assistance--or you offer your help because you sense they are stronger than your own abilities – they lead and you help. People feel this inequality.

When we *serve*, the wholeness of one, serves the wholeness in another **as equals**. Wholeness doesn't mean "perfection." As we serve with our whole selves, we serve with our limitations, our wounds, as well as our strengths and wisdom.

When we help someone, they owe us. After all we helped them! We have a sense of satisfaction with helping. When we serve, there is no debt; I am as served as the person I am serving. Serving leads to a sense of gratitude.

Sometimes "helping" comes in the guise of "fixing." Fixing someone is automatically a judgment that a person is in need of something more. That judgment creates distance, a disconnection, an experience of moral difference. We can only serve that which we are willing to touch, to be connected with and close too.



Mother Theresa is well known for her acts of *service*, her profound connection to the poor, the suffering, the unloved. She did not fix them. She did not even help them. She served them in love – not because they were broken, but **because they were holy**.

Fixing and helping often originates from our ego, while our soul is the source of our service. While they may appear similar on the outside, the difference is most often seen

from the inner experience. Fixing and helping are ultimately draining, depleting, leading to burnout. Service is renewing and life giving.

Perhaps helping, fixing and serving have more to do with our way of seeing life. When you see life as weak, you help; when you see life as broken, you fix; when you see life as whole, you serve. Service knows that we are all connected. All are loved, all are created in the image of God, my joy is like your joy, your pain is like my pain. Life is a sacred mystery that we encounter as we serve one another.

At times Marty has signed his letters “enthusiastically serving”. Shouldn’t we all try that approach to whatever big or little ministry we take on? After all we are not “helping” or “fixing” God. We are serving God. As we read in Ephesians, “*Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men,*” (Ephesians 6:7). God does not want our help or need our volunteer hours. God wants our love enthusiastically shared... because God knows that it is in our **service** to one another in love that we will find real healing to ourselves and to our world.



From the Pastor's Desk:

A Sermon Series...

by Pastor Marty

What do Presbyterian Christians believe? It might seem like a simple question, yet in reality, it is confusing for many Presbyterians. If you travel around the United States and ask Presbyterian Christians what they believe, you may find so many responses that you might think we believe almost anything. In fact, I remember one time overhearing a conversation in a Presbyterian church. A man asked a member of the church, “What do Presbyterians believe?” The man responded, “I’m not sure. I’ve been a member here for many years and I couldn’t tell you. I know we believe a lot of things.”

How about you, what do you think Presbyterians believe? When Elders and Pastors across our church were surveyed on this question, there was some common ground,

but at the same time, there was incredible diversity of opinion regarding our beliefs. One Elder responded to the survey by writing, "I'm not sure what we believe, but I sure know what I don't believe."

One of the hallmarks of Presbyterian heritage is the highly educated and highly argumentative nature of our Christian approach to beliefs. Presbyterians have always required their pastors to get graduate degrees. Not only must every Presbyterian pastor have a college degree, but they must get a 3 or 4 year master's degree, pass 6 written exams, study ancient Hebrew and Greek, and pass several oral exams in front of leaders of the church. Presbyterian pastors are well versed at seeing many sides of the same doctrine or biblical passage. Presbyterian doctrine itself began in the writings of a pastor-lawyer whose arguments, to this day, are used in forming the faith of millions of Christians.

So, what do we believe? In answering this question, we have often written statements of belief as well as catechisms. A catechism is a brief rendering of our faith in a question/answer format. In 1998, our Presbyterian denomination wrote a study catechism that you can find by clicking here: <http://www.pcusa.org/catech/studycat.htm>> . We now use this catechism with our youth, and we are about to review some of it with our adults in worship.

Beginning April 13, we will look into the question of our beliefs and see if we can find the common ground from where Presbyterians stand, and, from where we argue and continue to ask more questions. After all, we do believe in a mystery revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. No matter how many questions we ask and answer, the mystery of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior can never be fully answered with words. The only fully-faithful answer is to live into the mystery with your whole life. So may our explorations into our beliefs help us live more faithfully the love and grace we have discovered in the Risen One.

Blessings, Pastor Marty

Our Church Community

May Presbytery Meeting...Come & Volunteer

Saturday, May 3 we will host the Spring meeting of the Presbytery of Utah. Roughly 50 Presbyterians from around the state will come to COG for worship, lunch, and to discuss items of church business. We need 10 volunteers to host from 9 am-4 pm and ensure the Spring meeting goes well. We will need 3 registration hosts to work from 8-10 am. We will need 3 lunch hosts to work from 10 am-1 pm. And we will need 4 set-up and break down hosts who will set up tables and chairs for 50 on Friday May 2 for one hour and Saturday, May 3 from 1-2 pm. If you can help, please call or email Pastor Marty at 943-4043 or marty@cogpc.org.

April Open Forum: Operations

On Sunday, April 27, immediately following the second service of worship, Session will host the third Open Forum of this year. This time Session encourages anyone to attend who would like to discuss the area of ministry we call operations. This area includes building & grounds, budgets and finance, and stewardship campaigns. Session would love to have members come and share affirmations, comments, suggestions, or questions. The forum will last one hour and is open to all members.

COG Member Recognized for Service

Our own Millie Nielsen was recently recognized for her exceptional service to Hospice for Utah! Click on this link to see Millie's write-up and picture:

<http://www.hospice4utah.com/Volunteering%20Pages/Volunteer%20Stories.html>

Session Notes (*Meeting of March 18, 2008*)

by Dave Adamson
Elder

1. PRIORITIES. Session prioritized some of its work for this spring: preparation for a summer retreat, consideration of a 3-5 year plan, and status of mission & outreach.
2. BUDGET. Our monthly income and expenditures were reviewed. We continue to be on track with our budget. There may be some heavier impact on our snow removal budget because of the unusual winter, but under-expenditures in other areas will make up any short-fall. Responding to a request from PW, Session voted to change how it reports mission giving. Session also voted to adjust our annual budget accordingly, adjusting both
3. UPDATES. Session received status reports on the Open Forum held on February 20, the Nominating Committee that began its work on March 9, and the on-going search for Clerk of Session.
4. STAFF REPORTING. Session received the pastor's monthly report, this month using a new format intended to be more reflective and inclusive of all church staff. Session also voted to formally adopt this new reporting format for future meetings.
5. REPORT ON MISSION & OUTREACH. In preparation for its annual retreat, Session received a report on our activities in the area of Mission and Outreach.
6. AREA LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES. Session reviewed the workloads and expectations of our Area Leaders, along with an analysis of compensation provided for similar positions in other churches in the valley. Concerned about over-loading our staff yet unable to extend hours or hire additional staff, Session members began a series of discussions about recruiting and supporting volunteer leaders from the congregation. This discussion will continue in April with a review of our programs for children and youth.
7. RESIGNATION. Session reluctantly accepted the resignation of Melissa Venable from Session with regret, effective the end of May.

8. BAPTISM. Session voted to approve the baptism for Savannah Rollins and Abigail Rollins at the second service on April 20th.
9. OPEN FORUM. Our next Open Forum will be scheduled on April 27, focused on the topic of Building and Grounds.
10. SESSION RETREAT. A day-long retreat for Session to develop priorities for the 2008-09 program year is tentatively scheduled for May 17.

Presbyterian Links

Here are some helpful links for those who are interested in our denomination's work at the national level:

- [Home Page, PCUSA \(www.pcusa.org\)](http://www.pcusa.org)
- [Presbyterian 101 \[Facts about Presbyterians\] \(www.pcusa.org/101\)](http://www.pcusa.org/101)
- [Expressing Our Faith: National and International Service \(www.pcusa.org/navigation/mission.htm\)](http://www.pcusa.org/navigation/mission.htm)
- [What Presbyterians Believe \(www.pcusa.org/catech/studycat.htm\)](http://www.pcusa.org/catech/studycat.htm)

Children & Youth

Enthusiastically Serving

by Lorrie Gaffney

Children and Youth Director

Our 5th and 6th grade Sunday School class stuffed Easter eggs for our Easter Egg Hunt. I asked them, "Why would we do an Easter Egg Hunt at COG? What do Easter eggs have to do with Christian faith?"

Here is a sample of their responses:

- "Joy is a part of Easter."
- "Chick coming from an egg, is like Jesus coming to life from the tomb."
- "We stuff the eggs with treasures and good stuff because it is like our hearts when we love Jesus... our hearts are filled with treasure and goodness."

These kids stuffed the eggs with more than candy – they stuffed the eggs with the good stuff of God: their hearts, for serving younger children so they would know God's joy and love!

Thank you to our servant Easter Bunny and all who served by bringing food, setting up/clean up, inviting a friend, and taking time to celebrate the good news of God's love!



Vacation Bible Camp Announced

by Lorrie Gaffney

Children and Youth Director

Please mark your calendars now for Vacation Bible summer camp. The date is **August 4-7th**. Please consider inviting someone who can discover God's joyful love and please pray about your commitment to serve God and our children in this ministry.



VBS Planning

Youth Ministry

by Lorrie Gaffney

Children and Youth Director

LOOSE CHANGE TO LOOSEN CHAINS

students freeing modern day slaves

Think Fast: What if it were you, your child, your best friend, your mom...?

This year's 30-Hour Fast, May 3-4 will focus on modern day slavery. Think slavery is rare today? Actually there are more slaves today in the world than there were in the entire 400 years of the transatlantic slave trade. 80% of those enslaved are women...50% are children. You will have the opportunity to learn about many forms of slavery:

- Trokosi (a man who sins is required to give a virgin daughter to a witch doctor as a slave in parts of Ghana; for the girl to leave means her family will suffer a curse).
- Bonded slavery: a debt must be worked off, usually within impossible parameters.
- Police abuse resulting in unfair imprisonment.
- Lure of a real job that turns into imprisonment in a brothel, quarry, brick or other industry.
- Land seizures of orphans and women widowed by AIDS

Equally important you will have the ability to make a real difference to a real person experiencing the injustice of slavery:

- **Learn** about people who have organized to help us make a difference, such as:
"International Justice Mission" www.ijm.org,
"Loose Change to Loosen Chains" www.lc2lc.org

“Free the Slaves” www.freetheslave.net

“World Vision” www.worldvision.org

- **Share your voice** with friends and others to spread the word.
- **Fast** and commit your body to stand in solidarity for 30 hours with those suffering.
- **Give of your resources** to rescue a child who you will never meet except in our connection through Christ’s love.

A team will be meeting to make this a meaningful experience for all ages. Anyone passionate about this issue of justice is encouraged to participate with this team. You will learn much, and fall in love with the many faces encountering injustice, through planning and serving! Contact Lorrie Gaffney for more information.

Jesus came to offer life. We are now the hands of Jesus. Please pray and listen for God’s word...

This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. --Isaiah 58:6

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the oppressed. --Psalm 82:3

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. --John 10:10

**ACTS Kids Serve at Special Olympics
Bowling Tournament**

by Melissa Venable
Elder

Thoughts about our day volunteering from Katie, Victoria, Josh, Devin, Nicole, Jacob, Jesse, Ashley, and Robby:

- Volunteering for the Special Olympics was a privilege. I had fun while making friends that played in the Special Olympics. It made me feel good to be able to cheer them on and tell them how well they did. I am looking forward to volunteering again.



- We got to know one of the teams really well and we liked Gavin a lot. Each time he would stand the same way with his feet in a particular way and then he'd swing his arms back and forth and then throw the ball. He did really well and he was a better bowler than I am!
- Cozette was my favorite bowler. She always was smiling and really enjoyed the events. She liked us too and wanted us to be her volunteers all day. She even wanted us to have lunch with her and the others bowlers on her team which was really nice. When she got a strike or a good ball she would turn to each one of us and say, hey my new friend did you see that? And we would cheer for her and that was really great!
- Denton and Herman were lots of fun to cheer on and they were really good bowlers. I liked being able to give them the medals at the end of the event.
- I liked Karen. She is the calmest person I ever met.
- It was a great experience! I met a lot of nice people that God made special. I feel like I made a lot of new friends that day.
- Of all the bowlers you wouldn't even know that they were Special Olympians – they just were regular people who loved bowling and were pretty good at it.



- I liked Dusty, the one who wore the backwards hat. He was a very good bowler. It felt like we handed out like 800 medals!
- How did we make a difference? We helped build their self esteem and made them feel good about how they were bowling. I would want to do this again, for sure.
- When people walked away or forgot to bowl we'd help them know it was their turn. I felt good about being able to help the people.
- I really enjoyed watching all these people enjoy themselves bowling, however unusually they sent the ball down the lane. It was also really nice to see them always cheering each other on and applauding them, and not being so competitive arguments started.

The Special Olympics volunteer coordinator thanked the ACTS kids for their help serving all day. They made a big difference and were excellent helpers to the athletes and the bowling alley staff. At one point the staff had to help the volunteers with the computers but our group was all over it – those ACTS kids know their computers! Please help us again, she said, you were great!

Adult & Family

Making a Difference in our Environment

by Dede Carpenter
Adult and Family Director

Join our Family Fellowship and Service opportunity this month as we partner with Tree Utah to plant saplings at the Jordan Parkway location. This service opportunity addresses our relationship with the environment and how we can make a difference to protect and honor God's creation. Sign up now for this **Saturday April 26th event** in the Narthex. For more information on Tree Utah programs check out www.treeutah.org.

April Adult Drop In Class

Today's Slave Issues

by Dede Carpenter
Adult and Family Director

This month our "Drop in Classes" will focus on the issues of modern day slavery; the focus of our May Fast. Come hear the message of how children and others are being victimized and enslaved in today's world and what you can do to stop it. Short video clips will be presented with discussion following.

Al Staggs Weekend

by Dede Carpenter
Adult and Family Director

The message of Clarence Jordan and Dietrich Bonhoeffer was truly brought to life by our guest speaker Al Staggs! What an enlightening experience to hear and engage a message that continues to challenge people of faith today. How **do we** live out our faith and the belief that God's love is for all? It is an ever present call; faith in action, yesterday and today.

Over one hundred people purchased tickets for one or more of the weekend events. Despite an evening snowstorm, 85 people attended the Saturday dinner program. Sunday church attendance rose to 227, and 46 people attended the adult Sunday School presentation.

Because of the success of this first attempt at sponsoring an outside speaker, we are now considering a regular cycle of guest speakers (annual or every other year). **Hearing a different voice** can be a healthy vehicle for educating and growing our faith within our congregation.

PW Spring Events

by Sandy Killion
Presbyterian Women

You don't want to miss these!

Spring Gathering. April 18 – 19 in Brigham City. For details, see the PW Bulletin Board. For more details see the PW Bulletin Board

May Program. Monday, May 5 at COG. This is our annual potluck dinner where we have a speaker and installation of the PW committee members. We provide the bread and dessert. You bring your favorite salad. Dinner starts at 6:30. More information will be in future bulletins.

Remember, we are all members of the Presbyterian Women.



April Prayer Calendar

by Millie Nielsen
Prayer Coordinator

1. Lord, give servant hearts to our deacons as they serve the members of Community of Grace.
2. Bless and guide Pastor Marty, Dede, and Lorrie as they lead the ministry of this congregation.
3. Teach me how to forgive, dear God, so I may be weighed down no longer.
4. Bless the ministry of New Beginnings church.
5. God of grace and mercy, I give you praise and thanks for the blessings in my life.
6. I give thanks for the body of Christ broken for us and for the blood of Christ shed for us.
7. Lord, soften my heart where it has hardened.
8. Bless our sister church in Kenya with your truth, light, and strength and give peace to their country.
9. Lord, help me not seek revenge, but reconciliation.
10. Dear God, help me to forgive myself for what I did and did not do.
11. Dear Lord, may I trust that I am exactly where I am meant to be.
12. Father God, use me to turn the dark into light.
13. May worship today remind me of who and whose we are.
14. Lord, may I use the gifts I have and pass on the love that has been given to me.
15. Fill our session with the fire of God's love as they meet tonight.
16. Lord, I surrender to you my judgmental thoughts.
17. God, I pray for peace for all who are mentally ill.
18. Grant to the leaders of nations the prayerful thought and the thoughtful prayer that by following the example of our Lord, they may discern what is right and do it.
19. Subdue my selfish desire to possess and to dominate.
20. Thank you for praise through music in worship today.
21. God, heal my relationship with my parents, whether they are on earth or have passed away through death.
22. Lord, give your strength and resolve to people fighting addictions.
23. When I stumble, fumble, and fall, help me to rise.
24. Help us provide for all who are hungry and homeless.
25. Dear God, take away the pain of my past and heal my wounds.
26. Lord, lead me away from ignorance into knowing.
27. Thank you for our Christian Education Program that brings us closer to you and to each

other.

28. Lord, when I rest, may I rest in you.

29. Oh God, heal and comfort all who are sick.

30. God, remind me that I live not to please others but to please you.