

THE JOYBELL

of the

The Baptist Church of Grafton

An American Baptist Church

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Message From Pastor Frank

In Philip Yancey's book, "*What's So Amazing About Grace?*" he writes:

"During a British conference on comparative religions, experts from around the world debated what, if any, belief was unique to the Christian faith. They began eliminating possibilities. Incarnation? Other religions had different versions of gods appearing in human form. Resurrection? Again, other religions had accounts of return from death. The debate went on for some time until C.S. Lewis wandered into the room. 'What's the rumpus about?' he asked and heard in reply that his colleagues were discussing Christianity's unique contribution among world religions. Lewis responded, 'Oh, that's easy. It's grace.'"

After some discussion, the conferees had to agree. The notion of God's love coming to us free of charge, no strings attached, seems to go against every instinct of humanity. Only Christianity dares to make God's love unconditional.

We have just celebrated the Birth of Christ and I believe it represents one magnificent example of God's Grace and Unconditional Love for all of humanity. To even think that the Creator of all that is and ever shall be would surrender His Glory and humbly come to dwell with us, and live among us, is not an easy thought to grasp.

Oh, I know we have celebrated this marvelous event, told the story over and over again, and shared it as a faith community for centuries. We get it! Or do we?

I wonder if it has become nothing more than another holiday to celebrate, a worn out tale to tell with little or no real impact on our lives after the lights have been put away, after the gifts have been opened, the boxes discarded, and the parties and family gatherings are over and the leap into a New year has come. I wonder!

As for me, I have to confess that all too soon the demands of ministry, and life in general, send my thoughts in another direction and the miracle of the Christmas event becomes a distant narrative with little or no impact.

However, I have learned that slippery slide can only be halted when I begin to reflect on the Grace of it all! To think that God would abandon His Glory for me and give me something I could never get but only be given out of Unconditional Love is quite overwhelming and goes against every instinct of my humanity. Nevertheless, it is His Gift to me and to you. And it is a gift freely given.

There's only one catch. Like any other gift, the gift of grace can be yours only if you reach out and take it. Maybe being able to reach out and take it is a gift, too. What do you think? Could it be one of your New Year resolutions?

Peace/Shalom for the New Year,

Pastor Frank

A Note of Thanks

Kristine and I want to extend heartfelt thanks to all members and friends of Grafton Baptist Church for the very generous monetary gift you gave to us. We feel so blessed by your love, support, and kindness; and we feel it a privilege to serve with you in ministry until God sends you your next settled pastor.

Many thanks and many rich blessings,

Pastor Frank and Kristine

A Note of Thanks

Dear Friends,

At this very special time of year, I want to express to you my heartfelt thanks and gratitude for your sincere expressions of support, hope, love and continued prayers for me as I continue on the path towards what I hope and pray are healthier days ahead for me. As you know, six months ago, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 chronic kidney disease, which will require me to have a kidney transplant. The good news is that the doctor has informed me that things are relatively stable at this point. My goal for 2017 is to be placed on the transplant list and either find a living donor or wait for a suitable kidney to be found for me.

Although I find myself in this rather precarious situation, I am also truly blessed. I have a wonderful family who takes care of me and watches over me. I have a whole team of medical professionals just a few miles from my home who are genuinely concerned about me and know how to treat my illness and want me to succeed. Most of all, I have my faith in the Lord and my wonderful church family whose support and prayers mean the world to both me and my family. Your expressions of kindness, both spoken and written, give me hope for the future, especially on the days when I don't feel so hopeful.

I don't know how long this journey is going to take, but I want you to know that it is much easier with your support and prayers.

On behalf of both myself and my family I want to extend our sincere holiday wishes to each and every one of you and your families. Thank you for your continued support and prayers, they are very much appreciated!

Thank you and God Bless,
Leta .

Annual Crèche Display

The first Sunday in December marks the town's Christmas celebration, "Grafton Celebrates the Holidays". For the tenth year we participated by hosting an exhibit of Nativity Scenes owned by members and friends of our church.

This year, we had almost 200 different sets on display in the sanctuary during the afternoon. For the third year a small crèche was donated that was raffled off to a lucky visitor. No money was collected – just phone numbers. This year's winner was delighted to be chosen. Guests were also given an advent calendar as a thank-you for coming. Downstairs, Marcia Kamilewicz chaired the refreshments for visitors, providing hot or cold drinks and cookies baked by church members. June Whitney was our Boutique sales person for those who wished to shop.

There were a number of our church people who spent the entire day here, setting up, hosting and repackaging all of the crèches when the display ended. Recorded music from the Grotto added to the peaceful and joyous mood. There was a great crew who helped set up and then returned to re-pack and put everything away. This is a highly labor intensive project, and it could not have been done without all of this help. Many thanks to all who assisted.

Diaconate Report

The Deacons organized the Christmas Flowers for the Sanctuary this year. Plants were purchased for shut-ins and those who have been ill and others in

need of a Christmas hug. Deacons and friends delivered the plants to others and wished them a Merry Christmas too.

The Deacons are asking all the committee leaders to take a moment during each meeting to pray for the Search Team and the church in this time between settled pastors. It was suggested that we all pray the same prayer during the month for unity of prayer; a new prayer each month.

Lord,
May our congregation have the mind of Christ and agree, without unity, but through the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to satisfy every individuals personal needs, opinions, preferences, and agendas. May we each, and as a whole church of Christ, evidence the same attitude as Christ Jesus and be like minded in love. Amen

This prayer is inspired by Philippians 2:1-2. (From the New Living Translation)

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose."

Christian Education Committee

Undie Sunday continues: There is always a great need for both white tube socks and underwear of all sizes by the homeless of Worcester. If you can donate clothing items on the last Sunday of every month it would be greatly appreciated. These items, as well as sandwich lunches, are distributed by the crew from St. Andrew's Church that goes to the Worcester Common on the first Sunday of the month

Our Annual Christmas Pageant was held on December 18 under the direction of Donna Nicholas. This year the children, young people and teachers presented "The First Leon". There was singing to modern tunes, carols and a very special message about making room in your heart for Jesus. It was well received and people are still tapping their toes to the music. At Coffee time we enjoyed a birthday cake for Jesus and lots of delicious food.

Annual RMMO Offering

We begin the New Year by participating in the first of our five annual special offerings. The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering is used to address the emergency needs of the more than 3,300 retired ministers, missionaries and their

families. Among those needs are medical and housing costs. Several of our former pastors and their spouses are among those who have been assisted by this offering. Please consider making a donation in their honor. RMMO envelopes are available in the pew racks throughout January.

Giving Envelopes for 2017

The **2017 Envelopes** are available just inside the front door of the church. You should receive a box of envelopes if you have returned your pledge form. Your name appears on the top of the box. Envelopes are available at any time – just contact Chris Hoffman at 508-498-3887 or speak to any Finance Committee member.

Mission Committee Report

The committee received several thank you notes as well as informational notes from the various missions that we support. These will be posted on the new Mission Committee bulletin board in RFH. The new board will be much more centrally located and easier for people to access.

The Committee discussed end of year donations and voted to send funds to four different groups in support of their varied programs. A full description is in the Annual Report.

Equal Exchange Table: will be available for sales Sunday January 15 for people to replenish their supplies of tea, coffee, chocolate bars and nuts .This program helps to support fair wages for farmers around the world.

Property Update

- The Frosts moved into the Parsonage on December 19. Doug and Julieane will occupy our home for several months while they renovate a building in Worcester.
- Church garbage disposal has had issues which have been addressed.
- Patty and Steve Reichle have offered to paint the parlor, clean the rug and make the place more inviting. Ed King has offered to help during January/February while he is out on medical leave.
- Snow removal will be addressed on a storm by storm basis.
- Men's bathroom needs to be made into a single bathroom to make it more ADA compliant.
- Discussion of replacing the lights in RFH, hall, office and kitchen. Joe Gandolfo has submitted an estimate. Committee is considering asking for sponsorship of the lights to help defray the cost.

Please Welcome Our Substitute Church Secretaries

For a short while, when you call the Church Office there will be a different voice on the other end of the phone. **Meredith Christian and Donna Nicholas** will be sharing the Church Secretary responsibilities for the time that our regular secretary is away. Please note that there is a new email address for the church secretary: officebcg1800@gmail.com.

Annual Meeting SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

Please submit all committee and board reports to the church office on a disk or thumb drive or email them to officebcg1800@gmail.com on or before January 8.

This will allow the **Annual Report booklets** to be ready for **Sunday, January 15**. This will allow time for the congregation to read the Report in preparation for the Annual Meeting.

Church family members are invited to participate in a pot luck luncheon directly after church on January 29. Paper plates, plastic silverware and cups will be provided by the Church along with coffee, tea and punch. Please bring a dish to share with friends, your copy of the annual report and any questions you may have about our church's finances.

The **2017 Annual Meeting will follow the luncheon**. At this time members will hear the reports of various church boards and a report from the finance committee on church finances, and will be asked to vote on a slate of officers and committee chairs as well as the budget for the upcoming year. **Each and every person's participation is important**. Please plan to attend our Annual Meeting – it's your opportunity to ask questions, offer ideas and actively participate in directing our church's future.

In case of inclement weather, this meeting will be moved to **Sunday, February 5**.

Important Dates for January

1	Sunday	~	Worship Service to God's Glory. We will be meeting at the Congregational Church of Grafton at 10:00.
2	Monday	~	7:00 Long Range Planning with Morgan King
3	Tuesday	~	5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group

		~ 7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian
5	Thursday	~ 9:30-9:45 Prayer time in the Parlor
8	Sunday	~ Worship Service to God's Glory. Sunday School classes for children and youth. Coffee Fellowship after Worship.
		~ 11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
9	Monday	~ 10:00 Mission Committee with Dot Fox
10	Tuesday	~ 5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~ 7:00 Property Committee with Barry Keith
		~ 7:00 Finance Committee with Cyndy Engvall at Engvalls
12	Thursday	~ 9:30 Prayer Time in the Parlor
14	Saturday	~ 5:30 Shepherd's Pie Dinner, donation \$12
15	Sunday	~ 10:00 Worship Service to God's Glory, Coffee Fellowship following worship. Equal Exchange Sunday.
		~ 11:30 Choir Rehearsal with Pat Knowlton
16	Monday	~ 7:00 Board of Directors with Bert Engvall
17	Tuesday	~ 5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~ 7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian
18	Wednesday	~ 3:00-Worship at Crescent Manor
19	Thursday	~ 9:30-9:45 Prayer Time in the Parlor
22	Sunday	~ 10:00- Worship Service to God's Glory, Coffee fellowship following worship. Choir Rehearsal at 11:30.
23	Monday	~ 7:30 Deacons with Tom Hodgdon
24	Tuesday	~ 5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~ 7:00 Christian Education Committee with Susan Searles
26	Thursday	~ 9:30 – 9:45 Prayer Time in the Parlor
28	Saturday	~ 9:00-2:00 Quilt Class with Paula Moore
29	Sunday	~ 10:00- Worship Service to God's Glory, Undie Sunday. Annual meeting in Russell Hall following a pot luck lunch. Bring a dish to share and stay for this important meeting.
31	Tuesday	~ 5:15-6:15 AA Reflections Group
		~ 7:30 Bible Study with Meredith Christian

Every Week in January

- **Worship Service to God's Glory, 10:00am**, with Childcare and Sunday School Classes for children in Nursery through High School. Church Family Fellowship Time with refreshments following the Worship Service.
- **Deacons for the Month-** June Whitney and Barry Keith
- **Tellers for the Month -** The Deans and Libbey families

Stewardship for 2017- IMPORTANT: Please Read!

Our Stewardship Campaign is in full swing, but we still have a ways to go, especially for pledges towards Operating Expenses.

Thank you to all who have made a pledge for next year! It is our goal to complete the Stewardship Campaign by January 8, so if you plan to make a pledge, it will be helpful for you to hand in a pledge during the first week of January.

During this interim period, our church continues its active programs, missions, and fellowship. To have an active church requires financial resources. Here is what is needed to ensure that the mission of this church continues to be strong and effective next year:

- **Operating Expenses**
 - *Total anticipated Operating Expenses for 2017: About \$110,000*
 - *Pledge Goal: \$72,000:* Pledging is the greatest source of income towards Operating Expenses.
 - *Amount Pledged so far: \$38,000*
 - *Amount needed to achieve the pledge goal: \$34,000*
 - *This pledging area needs the greatest support.*
- **Missions:**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$3,000*
- **Building Fund:**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$2,000*
- **Savings Fund (formerly the Roof Fund):**
 - *Pledge Goal: \$2,000*

If you have never pledged before, it is easy! Here's some basic info about pledging:

- A pledge is what a person intends to give to the church during the year.
- Pledges make budget planning easier.
- A person is free to designate which area(s) s/he wants to make a pledge to.
- A pledge is *not* a legally-binding contract.
- Pledge amounts and designations can be changed during the year if a person's/family's financial situation changes.
- Pledge amounts are held in the strictest confidence by the Finance Committee.
- Questions? Call John King at 508-839-3302 or Bert Engvall at 508-529-9121 or.

I have faith that the members and friends of this church realize how blessed our church is, and are willing to continue to support it to the best of their abilities in order to ensure that its future will continue to be bright. *I trust that every giver supports this church because s/he strongly believes in the importance of its ministry, and, wherever possible, will try to increase her or his support of it. Continuation of this ministry depends on all of us working together to meet next year's financial needs.*

For convenience, a pledge form is included in this issue of the "Joybell" for those who would like to make a pledge for this year and have not yet done so.

The Finance Committee

The Baptist Church of Grafton
Planned Giving for 2017

During 2017 I plan to give the following amounts:

Fund	Amount	How Often (please circle)
Operating Expenses		per week per month one time amount
Missions		per week per month one time amount
Building		per week per month one time amount
Savings (formerly the Roof Fund)		per week per month one time amount

I understand that this Planned Giving is an indication of my intention to make this contribution to The Baptist Church of Grafton, and that this is *not* a legally binding contract.

Name (Please print): _____

To return this form:

Please fold, then staple or tape this form closed. Bring it to church and put it in the offering plate. Or give it to John King, David Libbey, Cyndy Engvall, or Bert Engvall. If you choose to put it in the offering plate, the offering counters will *not* open your form. It will be placed, unopened, in the Finance Committee mailbox at church. The Finance Committee treats all pledges confidentially.

Or Mail to:

Baptist Church of Grafton
PO Box 304
Grafton, MA 01519

Attn: Pledge

2017 Public Dinners Underway!

Our first public dinner of the New Year will be held on Saturday, January 14. We'll be serving **'Shepherd's Pie'**. The dinner will be served at 5:30 PM. While not required, reservations are appreciated by your kitchen crew. Please use the sign-up sheet in Russell Hall or call the church office (508-839-4911) to sign up.

Our sterling kitchen crew is looking for your assistance. Helpers are needed to set up and to clean-up after the dinners. If you can help, please remember to sign up in Russell Hall. Also please bring your contributions for our world famous dessert table!