

amazing

IN YOUR LIFE | IN OUR COMMUNITY | IN THE WORLD

# Grace

A monthly publication for members and friends of Grace Presbyterian Church in Walnut Creek, California February 2021

Dear Grace Church Family,

I heard a news story back in 2014 about an old Bur Oak tree on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor (*right*). The oak dates to at least 1764, 73 years *before* the university moved from Detroit to Ann Arbor.

However, the 65-foot tall oak stood in front of the School of Business, which was slated to be expanded. The tree would have to be cut down or relocated. The estimated cost of \$400,000 to move it seemed to doom the tree until students and community members started a campaign to raise the funds. With the help of a large donations, the goal was reached.



In order to move the tree, its 44-foot diameter root ball was wrapped in plastic and burlap, then rested on long metal pipes. Workers next inserted and inflated giant air bladders to lift the 700,000-pound package of tree and earth. Two transporters were then inserted to carry the tree, at a pace of about 1 mph, 500 feet down the street to its new home. There it could live, easily, for another 250 years!

I thought about that old oak tree as we move into 2021 and Grace Church beings is 63<sup>rd</sup> year. Like the old oak tree, the world around us has changed dramatically in the past decades. From our founding in the empty lot in Tice Valley next to the Dollar Ranch, we now live in a more densely-populated area with easy access to the rest of the Bay Area. Likewise, the religious landscape has shifted radically, and congregations struggle to find a way forward.

There are, I believe, two different ways for the church to view these changes. One way is to grieve the way the world has transformed, to “circle the wagons,” and to focus on survival by focusing inwardly. The other way is to see the changes as both a challenge and an opportunity, trusting that God’s Spirit is still at work in this world.

As most of you know, our founding pastor and biggest cheerleader, Rev. Bob Williams, died last month at the age of 97. In my last conversation with Bob less than a week before he died, he was keenly focused on the health and future of Grace Church. One way to honor Bob’s ministry is to continue the good work he did to overcome challenges and to move into God’s future with hope. My prayer is that we can, together, be worthy of that task.

Finally, a reminder that the season of Lent begins this month on Ash Wednesday, February 17. Look for more details soon about “virtual” worship on Ash Wednesday and for other information and resource for Lent. Blessings to all as we continue to endure this terrible pandemic while remaining hopeful in God’s mercy and compassion.

Grace and peace,

*Mark*

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### Mailer Page

Meetings at Grace, AARP Tax Aide

### WORSHIP AT 10 AM ON SUNDAYS VIA ZOOM FEBRUARY SUNDAY WORSHIP

- Feb. 7 – Mark 1:29-39
- Feb. 14 – Mark 9:2-9
- Feb. 21 – Mark 19:9-15
- Feb. 28 – Mark 8:31-38

For information, to view recorded worship services and more, go to <https://www.gracewc.org>.

Contact us:  
[gracepreschurchwc@gmail.com](mailto:gracepreschurchwc@gmail.com)  
or 925-935-2100

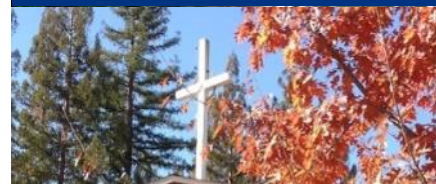
Sr. Pastor Mark Burnham:  
925-433-5459 or  
[revmrb@gmail.com](mailto:revmrb@gmail.com)

Associate Pastor Karen Hastings-Flegel: 925-433-5458 or  
[korgan81@yahoo.com](mailto:korgan81@yahoo.com).

Pastors Emerita: Charie Reid

Parish Associate:	Diana Barkley
Office Manager:	Judy Williams
Treasurer:	Linda Neyer
Asst. Treasurer:	Geri Rentz
Financial Scty:	Jennifer Wallace
Headshot Photos:	Carol King

All Articles must be submitted by February 19 to be included in the next issue.



**FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

Joan Larsen	2/1/2021
Sheila Whipple	2/2/2021
Betty Adams	2/6/2021
Jean Irvine	2/7/2021
Tim Pennington	2/13/2021
Betty Maynard	2/13/2021
Wendy Watkins	2/15/2021
Jennifer Wallace	2/16/2021
Reta Wilcox	2/17/2021
John Larsen	2/22/2021
Linda Neyer	2/25/2021
Florence Stone	2/28/2021

*Church Leaders for 2021***ELDERS****BUSINESS**

Bill Keeley	(2021)
Dave Fellner	(2022)
Jon Littig	(2023)

**CONGREGATIONAL LIFE**

Pat Devine	(2021)
Kathie Paul	(2023)

**DISCIPLESHIP**

Lynn Lyons	(2021)
Pat Hansen	(2022)

**WITNESS & MINISTRY**

Freddie Delamain	(2022)
Liz Bradner	(2023)

**WORSHIP & EDUCATION**

Roger Schultz	(2021)
Gessica Johnston	(2022)
Jan Zimmerman	(2023)

**DEACONS**

Faye Hutchings	(2021)
Carol Parker	(2021)
Gail Peterson	(2021)
Maryanne Sanchez	(2021)
Jane Burkland	(2022)
Jean Irvine	(2022)
Barbara Odell	(2022)
Mary Ann Littig	(2022)
Kathy Anderson	(2023)
Sally Day*	(2023)
Judith Jones	(2023)
Mary Munsell	(2023)

***In Memory****Rest in Peace devoted servants***Rev. Robert E. Williams****August 14, 1923 - January 19, 2021**

Our beloved Pastor Emeritus passed away at 7:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 19. Bob and Betsy had attended the Zoom church service on the previous Sunday. Bob's faithful and generous spirit has inspired Grace members and friends since he founded Grace Presbyterian Church in 1958. A memorial service is being planned and the Zoom time and information will be shared with all of you soon.

***And Beloved Members*****Jan Elliott****August 9, 1925 - January 22, 2021****Robert Smayda****January 18, 1940 - January 24, 2021*****Highlights of the Year 2020***

- The Grace Transition Team effectively led the church through 2019 and after more than a 24-month search, the Church welcomed new Senior Pastor, the Rev. Mark Burnham in April of 2020.
- After the pandemic hit in March, Grace Church moved to online/recorded services and meetings utilizing Zoom technology. Mid-year, donors stepped-up and funded a special Facilities Campaign. The church purchased equipment which will allow us to provide online live streaming services once in-person gatherings are allowed.
- With the help of the Richard Carll Endowment, the church was able to maintain pre-pandemic levels of staffing and make some scheduled repairs and improvements.
- Throughout the year, funds continued to be received from our faithful donors to the level of pre-pandemic giving. Our 2021 pledgers are fewer in number due to deaths within the congregation, but many have increased their pledges in support of the church's mission.
- As we look to 2021, significant challenges remain. Thankfully the shortfall in our 2020 budget was not as great as originally expected.
- **More details are available in the annual report which can be found on the Welcome Page of our website: <https://www.gracewc.org>.**

***Note of Gratitude***

Rapha Storbeck, who moved to Lincoln, CA, wishes to express her sincere thanks for all the letters of sympathy and prayers she and her daughters, Melissa Cope and Michelle Stoffregen, received after the death of Denzil Storbeck.

They deeply appreciate the support of Hospice, family and friends.

## Needling News

When our Needlers send the scarves for military they attach a tag to each one with our church's name and address. They always receive a nice thank you letter from Operation Gratitude. This month they also received an email from a Soldier stationed at an American Base in Saudi Arabia thanking them for his scarf. He said the handmade scarves let them know they are not forgotten especially during the holidays when they are far away from home and family. He also sent pictures of his unit wearing the scarves. It is a heartwarming experience to hear from our scarf recipients and know the scarves are appreciated and make someone happy.



*A windfall for our Needlers - A car full of bags of yarn for them to use for their projects. Thank you to all those who facilitated Needlers receiving this generous gift!*

The Needlers greatly appreciate all donations of yarn. This week they received a very generous donation from the family of Marilyn Stanley from Calvary Presbyterian Church in Berkeley. Their Pastor, Reverend Sung Kim (pictured), completely filled his car with large bags full of yarn and transported them to Grace. Sally Day is a friend of Calvary's Clerk of Session, Susan Hunn, and together they arranged to meet Pastor Kim at Grace and present the yarn to the Needlers. Susan Hunn is also a neighbor or Betty Adams, a Needler knitter.

If you knit or crochet and would like to join the Needlers and learn about all the philanthropic projects they do, please contact Marsha Stark. We would be very happy to have you join us.

## Treasurer Update

The 2021 Program Budget is to be approved by Session on January 27 and reviewed by the Congregation on January 31. We are grateful for the congregation's response to the Stewardship campaign so we will be able to maintain our pledge income of \$250,000. Due mainly due to the COVID19 shutdown and the resulting loss of facility income, as well as a full year of expenses for our new pastor, the budget is showing a loss of \$73,734. We plan to apply for a second round of Paycheck Protection Program loan which will partially offset the anticipated loss.

## Book of the Month

The book *“What Kind of Future Will Our Children Inherit? – The Glass Half Empty – The Glass Half Full”* - edited by Samuel P. Oliner and Ronnie Swartz, and published by Humboldt State University Press,



contains a compilation of writings about the future. It is an antidote for the difficult times we are living through today. Just when we feel the glass is half empty and that we are regressing as a species, we also need to keep sight of the fact that the glass is also half full and that there is progress being made on many fronts. Moreover, we also need to keep in mind that the glass can always be refilled. Prof. Samuel Oliner sums the situation up nicely in the following statement:

***“Depicting only the negative would lead one to think that there is nothing positive moving us forward; depicting only the positive would suggest that we have no further work to do.”***

I feel privileged and humbled that I was asked to contribute several chapters to this compilation of writings about the future. I was able to write about the transition from Ecumenism to Interfaith as well as a chapter on the future of the family and an exploration of the Holocaust and the future of genocide. I am proud of this book and the voices that have been expressed. I feel it is a positive contribution to life on the planet.

**A free digital copy is available through Humboldt State University Press**

[@digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/monographs/9/.](https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/monographs/9/)

By Pat Devine-Cummings

***Thank you to all who have donated flowers for the sanctuary this past year.*** The 2021 cost will remain at \$75 for an arrangement. Contact the office to get on the 2021 schedule.



Grace Presbyterian Church  
2100 Tice Valley Boulevard  
Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Sunday Worship at 10 AM  
<https://www.gracewc.org>  
February 2021

Address Service Requested  
Dated Material

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage  
P A I D  
Permit No. 8241  
Concord, CA

### **AARP Tax Prep 2021**

AARP Tax Aide will be offering limited tax preparation for seniors in 2021.

**AARP recommends that you may wish to hire a preparer for this year due to their very limited availability.**

**Note: AARP will not be meeting here at Grace Church.**

**Call this number frequently for updated information:  
925 - 405 - 6278**

*The church campus is closed for now.  
All meetings are conducted via Zoom. Contact the church office for help connecting.*

**10:00 AM WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**  
with Rev. Mark Burnham

**9:30 AM THURSDAY CONVERSATION  
& COFFEE** with Rev. Mark Burnham

**10:00 AM MEN'S CLUB:** Meets second Friday of each month

**11:00 AM WOMENS' CIRCLES:** Times TBA

**10:00 AM SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE:**  
Welcome and social time,  
recorded worship followed by discussion.

**Watch the recorded worship services anytime**  
at <https://www.gracewc.org>. Go to the Sunday Services page and click on the links to view.

*Listen to the latest Sunday sermon on your phone.  
Dial 925-236-2487 anytime.*



**Mrs. Smith got a little too used to watching online worship from home.**