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**GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
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To:



**Bring your
backpack
to church
Sunday, August 6**



**Sunday
August 20**

Grace Notes

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church

August 2023

Rally Decade?

This month, we have “Rally Day.” Many Presbyterian and other mainline churches have such days, whether they call it by that name or another. It is an old church tradition that complements the beginning of the school year. It’s a signal that summer is over, fall is approaching, and it’s time to “go back to church (and/or Sunday School).”

Unfortunately, it is more challenging every year to rally anew. As our congregation ages and fewer younger families attend than in the past, we wonder if we are doing something wrong, or need to rethink an occasion whose meaning is lost on many of those folks.

Looking Forward

August

- 6 Blessing of the Backpacks
- 20 Rally Day

September

- 4 Labor Day, Office Closed
- 23 Buddy Break
- TBD Congregational Meeting to elect officers

October

- 1 World Communion Sunday
- 3 National Night Out on the Front Lawn
- 14 Pumpkin Patch
- 15 Reformation/All Saints Sunday

See the church calendar online:
<https://www.grace.to/announcements/weekly-calendar/>

Continued page 3

In Sympathy

We extend Christian love and sympathy to the families of
 Ramona Viola - April 25, 2023
 John Craig - May 25, 2023
 Gail Evans - June 3, 2023
 Lynne Knorr - July 9, 2023
 and to:

Marian Bauer, whose sister passed away June 27;
 Rick and Kathy Richert, Rick's mother passed away in July;
 Ralph and Natalie Staschke and Carol Manno lost their son/brother.

Book Club

Panera Bread, S. Semoran
 Tuesday, August 22, 7pm
The Book Woman's Daughter
 by Kim Michele Richardson

D.E.C.K 2.0

6pm -11pm Second Fridays
 Craft with others for any amount of time. Questions: contact the church office.

ONCE AGAIN

It is that time of year when we have "Rally Day". (See Pastor Jody's newsletter article)

Let's Rally ourselves together

August 20 from

9:30am – 10:30am.

During our time together we will hear the good news and prepare ourselves to go into our community and make a difference!

We will meet together in the Sanctuary then move to Conway Hall for a Continental Breakfast. Bring your kids, bring your neighbors, bring yourself as we prepare to be Light!

Lunch Bunch

The Lunch Bunch will not meet in August and will return in September.

Happy Birthday

Happy Anniversary

Please contact the church office for a copy of this list.

Small Blessings Child Care

It has been a very busy summer full of exciting activities - petting farm, human hamster wheel, bounce house and Santa even showed up for a visit while on vacation! The children from the community, GCPC and SBCC attended VBS and it was a “Stellar” time. All the children learned to shine Jesus light through music, Bible stories and fun crafts and had a great time playing games. We are weeks away from starting a new school year and what a great message to carry, “to shine Jesus light” no matter what. Meet-the-Teacher is Aug. 4 and school begins Aug. 7 (Aug. 10 for VPK). GCPC thanks God for SBCC and all those who made summer time the best time ever!

NEW 10 Week Study for Adults

Sundays 9:30 - 10:30

August 27 - November 5
Upstairs in the Office Area

Materials Provided

What do we do with the sadness that living in a broken world brings to our lives? Most try to avoid the tears and focus on finding happiness, but does that really work? Learning to lament honestly to God is the surprising path to learning about real joy. Laughter and lament are often found together in unexpected places. How can we explain the opposite effect—laughter in the pain and tears in the joy? Using scripture and a book by Steve Brown “Laughter and Lament”, join as we experience together. Leaders are Robert Taylor and Sheryl Chernault.

I apologize for sounding like a downer! That’s not my intention. Pastors cannot always be the COO (Chief Optimism Officer). Sometimes, we have to take a sideways look at church traditions and re-imagine them.

I have read a recent series of opinion pieces from Jessica Grose of the New York Times as she explored the trend of Americans moving away from organized religion. Much of the religious press, concerned pastors and church officials have been wringing their hands over this trend, often referred to as the “Rise of the Nones,” meaning a set of people who have no particular religious affiliation.

Grose, who herself is Jewish but hasn’t participated in a temple in many years, echoes an ambivalence from many

who say they are Jews out of a sense of cultural or generational solidarity. This happens more often among Jews than Christians, I would guess. Still, the trend away from regular participation in a church community is a solid one. And the reasons are varied and complicated.

Many of us who lament the trend are quick to blame Sunday soccer and other sports that demand the attention of parents who seek the best for their kids. From there, we often descend into a pity-party of “Remember when nothing was open on Sunday?” and blame it all on anyone but ourselves.

In reality, we should be looking in the mirror and asking why folks are not as attracted to the good news as they used
Continue on page 4

to be. I think many still appreciate Jesus, but don't trust Christians to actually do what he commanded them to do: love and serve their neighbors.

You may disagree with that assessment, or find it unfair or unreasonable. And you may be right. But the question to ask is "How do we rebuild trust?" What is it the community needs that we can help with?

The key word in that last sentence is "community." In Grose's final piece of her series, she recalls receiving responses from over 7,000 readers to her request to share their reasons for being less religious. She talked extensively with some of them, and said "the one aspect of religion in America that I unquestionably see as

an overall positive for society is the ready-made supportive community that churchgoers can access."

Perhaps we need to simply focus on the benefits of community, as the early church in Acts did. You may not be ready to pool all of your resources together (Acts 4:32-37), but maybe it is time to step up our community outreach efforts. I challenge you to think of ways we can come together to meet community needs beyond those we have tried in the past. Be creative. Listen. Circulate in your networks. As you visit local businesses, ask them how Grace Covenant can help.

The attractive model of church used to work. It does not anymore. Building community depends on our efforts, guided by the Holy

Continue page 5

Spirit and inspired by God's Word. Pray for guidance. Open your ears. Take notes. Share your ideas with elders and deacons (whether they are actively serving or not!).

In this way, maybe we can transform Rally Day into Rally Year, or Rally Decade! Maybe we can be known as the church that rallies the community to do amazing work together. I think we can.

ROOTED Youth Group

August 6 Summer BBQ
 August 12 Back to School Bash (Saturday)
 August 20 Start of regular Sunday evenings
 5:15p – 7p

Watch for events and news:
 Facebook - Grace Covenant PC Youth
 IG - Rooted.grace.covenant

You're invited!
 All past & present, scouts and scouters.



Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
 RSVP By Aug. 26th

Troop 23 cordially invites the congregation of Grace Covenant to celebrate with them. Grace Covenant has been chartering Troop 23 for 66 years.