

CONNECTION

to inform & inspire

Looking Forward

2024 is here! I always enjoy the New Year because it is a natural time to reassess needs and set goals. Our top four assessed needs in this upcoming year are: 1.

To continue to build relational community at Grace, 2. Hire a new Children's Ministry Director 3. Give increased support to our Youth Ministry and 4. Increase our financial base for funding ongoing ministry needs.

Building Relational Community

As a commitment to build our congregation beyond our Sunday morning service, we desire to offer more opportunities for personal relationships to grow and thrive. This can be accomplished in a number of ways but in 2024 we hope to increase the number of home groups we offer so that there are mid-week gatherings that promote deeper relationships. Keep an eye out for our Home Group Host training early in the year.

Hire a new Children's Ministry Director

As we've announced, Dana Krieschok is retiring as our CM Director at the end of 2023. She will be leaving big shoes to fill as she has led this position for so many fruitful years (We love you, Dana!). We will be advertising for this position in January so please pray that God will connect us to the right candidate. In the interim, Debbie King and Karen Faust will team up to carry the CM team forward until we find Dana's replacement.

Give Increased Support to Our Youth Ministry

Our Youth Ministry has been faithfully led by



~Pastor Mark Johnson

Steve & Cierra Pera and Matthew & Sheela Hooper. In order to give them more well-deserved support we hope to team up with parents and brainstorm some fresh

approaches to best meeting the needs of our young people. We desire to continue to provide quality spiritual and relational investment to adequately equip our youth to love and serve our Lord with great purpose and passion!

Increase our Financial Base

In 2023 we put together a team of people who would explore and vet potential income opportunities to help supplement our giving to increase funding to our ministries. This "Income Discovery Team" has worked hard to consider the viability of many of your suggestions. The most viable has been to use our facility to host a Christian Day Care for our community. We are very excited about this idea which could bring in an additional \$3k-\$5k per month with the probability of growing. We are working with a licensed day care provider who will serve as the owner operator. We will be making more details known after the first of the year. So exciting!

While there are many more facets of ministry opportunities for Grace in 2024, we invite you to pray for Grace leadership as we work hard to grow our congregation as followers of Jesus and invite our community to know Him through our words and actions. Looking forward to what God holds for 2024!

Miracle Boy

When I was young, I had the profound experience of attending a worship concert where Max Lucado, a renowned Christian author, chose to direct everyone's attention to a little boy who was sitting on his father's shoulders, holding a microphone, singing along with the worship songs that were being performed. Intrigued by the boy's enthusiasm, Max interrupted his message to draw everyone's attention to the words on the boy's shirt. He asked the father from the stage, "...what does the boy's shirt say?" In a reply that could only be heard from the first few rows, the boy's father yelled, "Born to Worship!" When Max repeated this to the crowd, they erupted in applause, a thunderous acknowledgment that was as overwhelming as it was deafening. Who knew that such a little boy could stir such a large crowd into excitement?

During the intermission, I seized the opportunity to meet this duo. Little did I know, the boy's fame went beyond this worship concert; he held the title of "Miracle Baby." Born with internal complications that should have limited his life to a mere few days, he defied the odds, surviving for four months before the underlying issue was discovered. His father revealed this to me in tears because he knew how special his son was, and he wasn't the only one with this knowledge anymore. Now, we were two in a sea of thousands.

This revelation struck me deeply. What was written on this boy's shirt was something more profound than anyone knew. He really was "born" to worship, or rather, in this moment, "saved" to worship. As I continued to watch him, I noticed how passionate he was for the songs. He closed his eyes and raised his hands and swayed back and forth. He knew every word to every song atop his father's

shoulders. He was so young, yet he looked as if he were singing to God Himself. Angelic. I couldn't take my eyes off him. I couldn't help but think God had His hand on this boy.

I wondered what else had transpired in this family's journey to bring them to this point of passion and surrender in their worship. It must have been brutal for a father to be faced with the potential death of his son. And his son must have had so much fear as to not know if he were to live or die. As I reflected, I was reminded that God's work unfolds in unexpected ways, with unsuspecting people. It serves as a reminder that God can choose anyone to manifest His miracles and purposes.

I share this with you not merely as a captivating anecdote but as a call to introspection. God's presence is woven into the fabric of our lives, and His plans are beyond our comprehension. At any moment—today or tomorrow—God can use you to be a living miracle to someone around you. Perhaps he already has. Are you someone who wants a miracle in their life?

As 2024 begins, let us remember that we are all vessels of His workmanship. He is not finished producing that which is the miracle of our individual lives. Look sharp in 2024. Don't let these miracles elude you. They are likely all around as we are unaware.



~Pastor Jonathan Casas

Elder Candidates for 2024

The Elder Board at Grace Fellowship consists of volunteer members as well as Pastoral staff. The purpose of this board is to give spiritual and functional oversight to the staff and ministries at Grace. For those who are serving in a volunteer capacity, the term of service is four years. This ensures that we are ever gaining fresh eyes and insight into this important team. In 2024 we lose two of our volunteer elders: Dale Wiebe and Steve Pera. We are so grateful for their investment.

Looking forward to 2024, we are hoping to gain three additional candidates. As new elders are approved by a congregational vote, we invite you to get to know them all better and prayerfully give them a vote of confidence at our Annual Meeting on February 4.

Our 2024 Elder Candidates are:

Dan Conley



Dan & Kim Conley are long-time members of Grace and Dan has served a term as an elder in the past. They have three children who have also given them 10 grandchildren! Dan is a retired teacher in the field of industrial education and has invested his skills at Grace as both a children's ministry teacher as well as a capable teacher to our adults. Dan is currently in charge of our rest home ministry at Grace.

Matthew Hooper



Matthew & Sheela Hooper moved to Amador County in 2017 and have three children. Matthew has served at Grace in the past as an Interim Associate Pastor and is a familiar face to teach on a Sunday Morning, at Men's gatherings and with our children and youth. Matthew is a Growth Coach and Consultant with the Townsend Leadership and Counseling Institute.

Jeremy Chadwick



Jeremy & Wendy Chadwick have been a part of Grace for so many years that we've seen their three sons grow from toddlers to adults! Jeremy works as an Identity and Access Management Supervisor for UC Davis Medical Center. Jeremy has served as an elder in years past and he and Wendy oversee our Haiti child sponsorship program called The Bridge. Jeremy is a capable teacher. He has served in this capacity for our Sunday 9am classes, for our Men's Ministry, for training pastors in Haiti and in our Sunday morning worship service.



Single women of all ages
meet on
Wednesday, January 3rd
@ 6pm
Soup dinner at Nancy
Johnson's house.
81 N. Pioneer Circle
Jackson



The next season for
Prime Timers' luncheons
begins on Saturday,
February 10th at 11 AM.

Delicious food,
entertainment and
fellowship continue to
be the highlights.

The crew of 12 board
members looks forward
to serving you in 2024.





Secret Sister Sign~ups



Sign up today in the lobby for Secret Sister 2024

You can encourage and share the love of Jesus with your Secret Sister by sending a card on a special occasion, praying for her and sending a small gift to brighten her day.



Redemption

A Study of God's Love in the Old Testament

By Debbie King

I just love the Old Testament, but that wasn't always the case. In days past I found it a confusing mess. As I read through, I encountered Ezra's story long before Daniel's, yet Daniel lived before Ezra. I didn't understand how covenants worked or why God would walk between the cut up pieces of a sacrificed animal. It was all I could do to keep track of people and places, and overlapping stories. And oh, the lengthy genealogies! I'd listen to people say how mean the God of the Old Testament was while the God of the New Testament was all about love. "Isn't He the same God?" I thought.

Then one day my mom gave me a new high-tech 12-part Old Testament series on cassette tapes, and it all began to make sense. Before long I was in love with the Old Testament! I learned the organization of the books, which really helped with the order of events. I learned the concept of the ancient covenants and the rituals that ratified them. Identifying key people and where their stories were recorded helped me to see the big picture. Understanding ancient Middle Eastern culture answered so many confusing questions. I learned of God's plan for the governing of His chosen nation - the prophet, the priest, and the king. On top of all this, I found the prophecies fascinating. I'm still on my Old Testament journey. And, I've discovered that the more I learn, the more the New Testament opens up to me, too. I'm excited for the opportunity to share what I've learned so far in the upcoming 12-week women's Bible class.

We'll be meeting in Barrett Hall on Tuesday mornings, 10:00-12:00, beginning January 16, 2024. I'd love for you to join us!



LOOK SEE AND DO NO EVIL

It's just that easy to avoid evil in our lives, right? Do no evil. So, what's the big deal?

The word evil is defined as: morally reprehensible: sinful, wicked. an evil impulse. b: arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct. a person of evil reputation.

I'm throwing a curve ball at all of us for the new year ahead. Did you pick up on the words in the definition – sinful, imputed bad character or conduct. Yikes!

I've always associated evil with Satan and his evil spirits. Ephesians 6:12 spells it out, *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."* Notice the word wrestle. None of us are immune to Satan's evil ways and his subsequent impact on us. We have to deal with this constantly BUT there is hope.

No matter what comes our way, Luke 1:37 says *"For nothing will be impossible with God."* Now this is something we can 'take to the bank'. Nothing, not a thing is impossible with God. I'm sure you've heard this before, and it's always good to keep this in mind that, no matter what

you're going through, 'He's got this'. At any moment when we're experiencing stress and anger, those are the times when we must break away and run to Him in full realization that Satan is pulling out all the stops to de-rail us.

Proverbs 8:13 hits home as we must be careful as we speak and of course the part we play in the hatred of evil. This scripture says; *"The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate."*

As the new year is upon us, I'm hopeful and prayerful that we'll really look within ourselves to see those areas of our personality that might offend others and those areas that escalate that negative nature that Satan loves.

What better verse to end with than Psalm 34:14 *"Turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it."*

Turn or burn – it's our option! Happy New Year brothers and sisters.

~Duke Foster

The Faithful Servant

Children's Ministries

Jesus tells the story of someone who He honors, who He commends, who He favors, who He loves. Who is this person? It's the faithful servant. He's the one who does his job and does it well, even when no one is watching, even when his master is in a far away land.

What does it take to become a servant like this? If we listen to Jesus' other stories we learn that this kind of servant oversees big things, like making sure the vineyard is well cared for and productive, so it will yield the best fruit. This kind of servant also does the little things, the unseen things, the mustard seed things, things that no one ever sees. He's not like the slave who, when he's forgiven of a huge debt, then turns and condemns his fellow slave of a small debt. No, the faithful slave cares for those under him, like the shepherd of the lost sheep or the Good Samaritan on the dangerous road.

This kind of faithful servant does not strive to be noticed, but is content to be the least. He cultivates good soil in others, helping to remove rocks and weeds, and does all he can to shield from birds that steal the good seed. He doesn't vie for the seat on the right or the left; rather, he bends down and washes feet. When times are tough, he carries his cross, thankful for the suffering that allows him to follow in the footsteps of his master. He's generous to those with less. Gives of his time, his money, his soul. And, what does his master see when he returns from his long journey? He sees his faithful servant, with arms stretched out, offering him ten times more in his hands. His master stands silent for a moment as their eyes meet. He is so very pleased! Oh, the praise and honor the master showers on his faithful servant, and he blesses him with abundant rewards!

Right here, in our fellowship, God has given us such a servant, an example of Jesus' story, so we can see what this kind of person looks like. The servant I'm speaking of has served faithfully for nearly twenty-five years, caring for all those under her leadership. She has supported our teachers, helping them cultivate fertile soil that's eager to receive the good seed. She has loved on babies, nurtured little ones, and engaged older children in conversations about her own Lord and Master, leading many to faith

in Christ. She has done the big things, like reaching out to parents to provide support and encouragement, and planning a multitude of special events, from Christmas and Easter pageants to talent shows and Valentine teas, each one designed to share the love of her Master. She has done the really big things, like leading our own Creative Arts Camp and Fall Festival, outreaches that give the good news of her Master to more than a

thousand children each year! Her service is also filled with countless silent hours of preparation, organization, and attention to details - all the little things that no one ever sees, just like the faithful servant in Jesus' story.

One day we will all stand with tears in our eyes as Jesus calls out Dana's name, and she climbs heaven's podium up to the throne of grace. Jesus will wrap His arms around her, place her crown on her head, and announce to all the hosts of heaven, "This is My faithful servant! Well Done!"

Thank you, Dana Krieshok for showing us what it means to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength! We at Grace Fellowship Church are deeply indebted to you and so appreciate you showing us what it looks like to be the Lord's faithful servant!

Thank you!

~Debbie King





Birthdays

2nd: Jonathan Casas
 3rd: Richard Cavaliere
 3rd: Jason King
 3rd: Andre Pieterse
 4th: Valerie Cavalli
 4th: Carol Oliver
 4th: Maverick Pera
 6th: Sam Aronovsky
 8th: Courtney Brusatori
 10th: Sean Parkyn
 13th: Maggie Haight
 13th: Daniel LaSavio
 16th: Susan Dudley
 17th: David Hartsuyker
 20th: Roxanne Kinne
 20th: Michael Kidman
 22nd: Larry Bates
 22nd: Kinslee Catto
 22nd: Brittany Cranfill
 29th: Jenny Cranfill
 30th: Duranda Marchell



January 2024

Anniversaries



3rd — Matthew & Sheela Hooper
 11th — Jared & Pam Seago
 13th—Richard & Lindy Kidman
 16th—Wayne & Jodi Woodard
 20th— David & Lilly LaSavio
 24th—Gilbert & Jackie Gonsolis



January 2024

WEEK	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	31 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	01 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	02 9:30am Men's Bible Study	03 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting Living Your Best Life 6pm @ Nancy Johnson's	04 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	05 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	06
2	07 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	08 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	09 9:30am Men's Bible Study	10 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	11 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	12 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	13
3	14 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	15 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	16 9:30am Men's Bible Study	17 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	18 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	19 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	20
4	21 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	22 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	23 9:30am Men's Bible Study	24 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	25 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	26 6:30am Men's prayer meeting	27
5	28 9 am Sunday School 10:30 Worship Srv 3pm Boy Scouts	29 6:00pm Women's Growth & Support Grp	30 9:30am Men's Bible Study	31 6:15-Weds Night Church Prayer Meeting	01	02	03