



Trusting God in Challenging Times

By Mike Sciarra

It seems everywhere you turn there are references to the tough economic times we are in. Our country is in financial crisis. It affects our households and it affects the church. At Grace we are significantly behind budget, so we've instituted a contingency plan which reflects the shortfall in giving. We want to be good stewards of God's resources, so we've asked ministry leaders to carefully weigh each expenditure. We're holding off on improvements such as refurbishing the Fellowship Hall restrooms (including upgrading one to be wheelchair accessible) and some needed security fencing on the north end of our property and looking closely at our contract services to see where we can minimize costs. We remain committed to living within our means and that means not spending more than what comes in.

Our true source of security is in Jesus but it is a struggle during these tough economic times to make ends meet, isn't it? We see our money evaporating into thin air, be that our family budget or our retirement account. What's the correct response to this from a Biblical point of view? Phil. 4:19 says "And my God, shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Believers then, as they are now, were faced with making tough financial decisions, to give when it was a sacrifice to do so. We encourage you to not panic but to trust God. Keep giving to God first out of what He gives you. Everything we have comes from Him (James 1:17). We're not to give because we are obligated or asked to but because we love Him and want to. God loves cheerful givers. He makes His grace abound so we have what it takes to do what He calls us to do (2 Cor. 9:6-8).

While we must be wise stewards of God's resources we also need to trust Him to provide. We believe this is not a time to retreat but to step out in faith. We believe we can make budget this year. God can provide even more than we need, so while it will take sacrifice on all our parts, we must faithfully reach for the goal, knowing that work of eternal significance is at stake. Jesus spoke in Luke 16:1-15 of the unrighteous steward who was actually shrewd and wise in relation to his master's finances. Jesus used it as a teaching point to use money for eternal purposes (see v. 9). The conventional wisdom when financial markets are tough is, "Don't panic, keep investing, and stay in the market for the long haul". How much more ought we to apply that to the spiritual realm? The things of this world will not last. All the more reason to use the material things God gives us to further His kingdom's purposes. Keep investing in things of eternal significance.

In the privileged lives that we live, challenging times are unique opportunities for us to express our trust in God through action. Think of the boy who gave his lunch to Jesus and it fed 5000 (Luke 9:16). There was the poor widow who gave her two last coins, all she had to live on, to God. Jesus said she gave more than anyone because they gave out of their surplus while she gave out of her poverty (Luke 21:2-3). Today, some are in trouble financially, and some are not. Whatever your situation, we as church leadership want you to know we love you and encourage you to give even if it is tough to do so right now. These tough economic times are a God-given opportunity for Christians to shine the light of God's truth on a desperate world, an opportunity to build treasure in heaven. This is a chance to trust God and do what 2 Cor. 5:7 says, "walk by faith, not by sight". God is in control and He is able to do more than we could ever ask or think!

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*2 Corinthians
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Crown Ministries Biblical Financial Study

By Alan Cech

"Do you have financial worries?? Looking for God's perspective?? There will be a Crown Ministries ten week Biblical Financial Study starting at Grace Church in January 2009!! This is an in-depth study of what Scripture teaches about money and possessions. Marriages are strengthened, and individuals encouraged, as we explore God's Word regarding debt, saving, spending, budgeting, earning money, investing, giving, and training children. Groups of ten (couples and singles) will start meeting in homes once a week for ten weeks. There will be reading and homework required, along with some scripture memorization. Cost for the materials will be \$30/couple or \$20/single (less \$25 that the church has decided to cover on your behalf). Please contact the church office if you are interested in signing up for this class!! As of now, spaces are limited, and first priority is to those attending Grace Church of Orange. If you have any questions, please contact Alan Cech at (714) 544-5985 or at cechfam@yahoo.com.

Celebrating Change

By David Andritch

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Change is never complete, and change never ceases." The Brady Bunch sang, "When it's time to change, then it's time to change."

Last spring the leadership at Grace began to consider changing how we conducted our mid-week ministries. As we continued to talk, pray, and consider every possible aspect of these ministries, we discovered God was calling us to step out in faith and try something new. So, we switched to having all the ministries on one night and even added a dinner! The youth moved from Tuesday nights to Wednesday and beginning September 10 we were off and running. As we have followed God's leading, we have seen His blessings at every level.

Wednesday Nights
@ Grace

We have had more opportunities for fellowship as we share a wonderful meal provided each week by **Emily Wright** and her wonderful team. Child care for the youngest children of those participating or serving in our various ministries is graciously provided by **Rob and Alicia Dueck**. 25 active preschoolers are taught of God's love and care by **Angela Zuniga** and the entire Cubbies team. Approximately 50 Sparkies are led in games, council time, and the study of God's Word by **Colleen Ma** and team. With almost 50 boys and girls registered in our T & T clubs, we are seeing God work dramatically in the lives of the students through directors **Melo Manthorne, Pete Roberts, Simon Goodyear** and team. We thank God for the outstanding leadership provided to our Awana clubs by **Jim Hughes, Paula Hughes, and Julie Murillo**.

In addition, we are seeing solid growth in our Junior High ministry as it is led by **Bob Gnewuch** and his team. **Dan Martin, Matthew Holbrook** and staff continue to challenge our High School students as they teach God's Word as well as minister to others beyond our local church and national borders. On the adult level there is a room stocked with coffee, tea, and goodies for adults to hang out and fellowship in. Our weekly parent's gathering, led by **Glenn and Angela Parry**, provides opportunities for parents to grow and be supported in their God-given task of parenting.



We also have a Women's Bible study going on as well. Add in the huge influx of new adult volunteers and you see that Grace is a pretty exciting place to be on Wednesday nights!

If you have not yet had the opportunity to see what God is doing at Midweek @ Grace, I invite you to check it out. The change will do you good.



Dominican Republic Report

By Matthew Holbrook

From November 6-12, 25 people from our church were in Monte Plata, Dominican Republic to serve alongside Rebekah Holbrook in ministering at the Templo Biblico church, the Casa Monte Plata Orphanage, and the Eva Russell School for disadvantaged children.

After attending the Friday evening service at the Templo Biblico, the team produced a Saturday morning children's outreach at the church. About 150 children from the neighborhood attended to see puppets, sing songs, see Bible story skits, hear the gospel presented, and make a craft to remind them of the gospel message. The program went beautifully and the gospel was clear.

On Saturday afternoon, the team began various painting projects, and going door-to-door to invite the neighborhood to the drama outreach, Speechless, the next night. Saturday night, the team led the youth group service. Usually, the church has about 30 people attend the youth group. On this particular night, over 100 jammed into the room. Through games, music and a message, the gospel was again loudly proclaimed.

On Sunday morning, the group attended the church service. Then the work really began in earnest. Sunday afternoon was spent preparing for a Speechless presentation that night. After feverishly working all afternoon to prepare, the team was ready to present the Spanish version of this powerful drama that drives the gospel home. The church was absolutely packed. We estimated several hundred in attendance as no more could fit into the church; they were standing along the walls. And God blessed. The gospel was clear and convicting. Many responded and the fruit was abundantly evident.

On Monday, the team continued with the painting projects, as well as working on re-roofing the missionary home at the school and completing some electrical repairs. Part of the team even painted a mural in the children's room at the church. That afternoon, the group went to Casa Monte Plata and spent time with the 25 orphans who live in this orphanage. The focus of this time was just to love on the kids – and it was easy to do! That night, some of the group stayed to watch the kids at the orphanage, while others went to the school to prepare a beautiful dinner for the House Parents at the orphanage. A night out was a special treat for these House Parents and we were able to treat them to great food, live music, and an overall special time of rest.

Tuesday morning was spent finishing the painting, electrical and roofing projects. That afternoon, an outreach program was held at the orphanage for the kids in the immediate area around the orphanage. About 80 kids attended and again heard the gospel clearly proclaimed. That night, the

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group attended a special service held by the youth group at the church. They wanted to thank our group for our work, and we had a special time together as we all thanked God for His work among us.

Then God showed His sovereignty over all things. Much of our group became sick on Tuesday night. But the first one got sick at the end of our very last program that we had planned for the trip. And the last one got better about 5 minutes before we left for the airport on Wednesday morning. Tuesday was a long night, but God proved faithful. No part of the ministry plans for the trip was affected by the sickness and we were all healthy enough to return home on schedule. God is good.



YWAM, House of Hope Mission Trip to Mexico

By Glen Parry

February 6-8 the Bushs, Parrys, Goodyears, and the Clarks (a family that doesn't attend Grace) will be traveling to Mexico to build a home for a needy family. Please be praying for these families as they prepare to serve the Lord and those in Mexico. Here are a few specific prayer requests from the team: the family that receives the home built will receive Christ, the team will work well together and be unified in purpose and in spirit, there will be safety with the handling of the tools, safety in travel, and good weather conditions for the project as well as travel. Thank you for serving along side them through prayer and support.



College Career Trip to Joshua Tree

By Brian Zuniga

The trip is one of the highlights of the college/career group every year. Whether you like climbing and rappelling or games and sitting around the campfire, there is something for everyone in Joshua Tree. This year, over 25 people came for a weekend of fun and spiritual renewal. God's faithfulness was the theme; the teaching and quiet times revolved around this idea. Nate Parry gave his testimony, highlighting God's incredible faithfulness to him and to his family over the course of his life. And of course, no college/career trip would be complete without Greasy Load Uno, Texas

horseshoes and the superior-to-s'mores-in-every-way dough cup. Overall, the group had a great time on the trip and is already looking forward to next year.



WINTER CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

MEN'S BREAKFAST Saturday, December 20 at 7:30AM



If you miss this one, you'll be missing out on the best one of the year. This is where the cooks go all out! Meet in the Fellowship Hall and bring your appetite and friends. This ministry meets on the 3rd Saturday of every month. Contact Tom Licata at tlicata@graceorange.org.

Emmanuel **God is with us!**

DECEMBER SERMONS

Sunday, Dec. 7

The First Disciples- Matthew 4:18-22

Sunday, Dec. 14

Jesus Draws a Crowd- Matthew 4:23-25

Sunday, Dec. 21

God is With Us- Matthew 1:18-25

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Invite your friends and family to enjoy an inspirational Christmas program Sunday, December 21 at 6:00PM. This family event is guaranteed to be a great time for all ages. Tasty refreshments will be served afterwards. No childcare provided.

Snap Shots

September-November 2008



(Clockwise from top right: Praise Dinner, Youth Sunday, Praise and Worship, International Food Fair, Holiday Sampler)

Winter Calendar: December -February

Life Builders Christmas Party	December 7	Evening Communion	January 11
Cookie and Tradition Exchange	December 12	Sewing Circle	January 20
Candlelight Christmas	December 21	Men's Night Out	January 23
No Mid Week Programs	December 24	On Mission Training Day	January 31
Office Closed- Christmas	December 24-25	HS Winter Retreat	February 6-8
No Mid Week Programs	December 31	House Building Mission Trip	February 6-8
Office Closed- New Years	Dec. 31-Jan. 1	Fellowship Four Dinner	February 8
Crown Ministries Grps Start	January (TBA)	Father/Daughter Event (elementary)	February 15
Getting To Know Grace Class Starts	January 11	Father/Daughter Event (teen)	February 27

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