



Volume 12, Issue 3

March 2023

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MARCH PASTOR'S PEN

"Benefits of Attending a Small Group"

I thank God for all y'all who attend Grace EPC and also thank Him for all of the leaders that serve Him here! Our Ruling Elders take their Calling very seriously. They also recognize the importance of Bible Studies and Small Groups. You may ask; what is the difference between a Bible Study and a Small Group? I'm so glad you asked, LOL! Bible Studies are intended to help us increase our Biblical knowledge. Small Groups give us a more personable environment to mature and live out our knowledge with each other. Both can work together in our growth towards becoming a mature disciple of Christ. We have many Small Groups available, scattered throughout our local communities, but we are praying and hoping to develop more, and also praying and hoping more will participate. Christianity is meant to be relational—first, on a vertical axis between ourselves and God and, second, on a horizontal axis between ourselves and those around us. Small Group Bible studies move us from being spectators in a weekly church service to active participants in a like-minded community dedicated to spiritual growth. The "Wordgo" app (I know...what is an app?...ask one of your grandchildren) lists these 6 Benefits of Small Groups.

1. It follows Jesus' example

As believers, we seek to follow Jesus' example in all things. Although Jesus preached often to large crowds, he chose to empower and prepare his followers for ministry in a small group setting. The early church continued with this discipleship model; Acts 2:42 tells us that first-generation believers met in homes and "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship."

2. It directs us in wisdom

The Bible is a roadmap for life! It contains 'everything we need for life and godliness' (2 Peter 1:3). Yet just as sometimes we need someone to help us read a map, we benefit from others' experience of digging deep in God's Word. They will have found gems of wisdom that we have not yet discovered. We can offer insights that they have not yet learned. This is the beauty of journeying through the Bible together.

3. It creates meaningful connections

Humans were not designed to be alone. We were made to be dependent on God first, but also on one another. In an increasingly virtual world - where social media interactions can often be superficial and increase feelings of isolation - small group Bible study offers a powerful means of forging deep and life-giving connections with other believers.

4. It provides necessary encouragement

The group study context also provides a safe space for members to share their struggles. Witnessing the faith of another believer encourages us to keep going when things get tough (Romans 1:12); gives us the opportunity to comfort those in trouble 'with the comfort we ourselves have received from God (2 Cor 1:4); and enriches us as we hear how God has strengthened, guided and directed others throughout their lives.



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5. It keeps us accountable

Small groups offer the optimal environment for meaningful belief and behavior change. Every believer requires others to help them understand biblical truth and how to apply it. All of us need our knowledge sharpened, blind spots in our thinking corrected, and resistance to changes in our behavior challenged. We mature much more quickly in our faith when we can ask one another questions like, 'What steps are you taking to change that?' and, 'How did that go for you this week?' Accountability leads to more fruitful application of truth.

6. It transforms our families, workplaces and communities

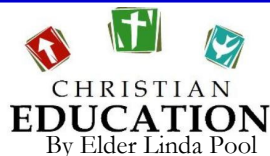
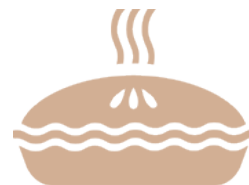
We read, He speaks, we are transformed. When we study the Bible together, God promises to reveal Himself, to teach us how to obey Him, and to show us how to love one another. When we are changed to become more like Jesus, our family, workplaces and communities will be eternally impacted.

If you currently are not involved with a small group, please pray about it and consider possibly starting to attend or even possibly starting a new one in your community! The small group locations and times are printed on the back of our bulletins every week!

Please note: one other benefit of going to a small group is that they many times will serve a goodie, such as lemon meringue pie!

I love all y'all in the love of Christ!

Pastor Rick Rosenkrans



Traveling Light

-Ruth Bell Graham

The Christian life is like climbing a mountain. For some people the climb is a gentle ascent; for other people the climb is like attacking the north face of the Eiger. Christina Rossetti wrote:

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend."

Whether our climb is easy or difficult, we need to be in shape spiritually, we need spiritual nourishment and exercise. We need to spend less time reading about the Bible and spend more time studying the Bible. Then we need to apply what we learn--carefully and vigorously--to our lives, to live out daily what we have taken in.

To travel light, we need to lighten our loads. Some of us may need to trim off excess weight. Others of us have too many social involvements and too many meetings to attend. (Remember the caution: "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life.")

When the disciples were sent out two by two, they traveled light--"without purse, bag or sandals" (Luke 22:35,NIV).

Times change, situations vary, and God's orders to His followers are individualized. But the need and the message continue the same—and the goal. It's up to us to be in shape and to travel light.

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. --Hebrews 12:1, NIV

PRAYER: Father, please reveal the things that prevent me from fully obeying Your call. Thank You for guiding me as I drop these weights from my life.

From: "Letters from Ruth's Attic" by Ruth Bell Graham



Evangelism Task Force

Be an Andrew

“He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah’ (which means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas’” John 1:40-42

We certainly have read and heard much more about Simon Peter than we have about Andrew, his brother. But look how important he really was! Where would we be today if God hadn’t used him to bring his brother Peter to the Lord!

There are so many prominent evangelists in history that we still remember. Men like George Whitfield, John Wesley, Spurgeon, Billy Graham, just to name a few. But even though these men have been remembered for the numbers they preached to, there are so many others that haven’t been recorded in history who have been used by God to grow His Kingdom.

There was probably at least one such person in your past who had a hand in leading you to Christ. In Proverbs 11:30, it says: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.” Someone in your life was sharing their faith with you. If we think about it in this way, we should be anxious to tell people whom we love about Jesus. After all, where would we be without the person that brought us to the Lord, just like Andrew did!

It’s been said that “the only thing you can take out of this life are the souls that you bring to Jesus.”

The apostle Paul knew this when he wrote:

“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.”
1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

You and I may never be a Peter. There just aren’t that many Peters. But we can be an Andrew. And only the judgment seat of Christ itself will reveal the scores of unknown Andrews, to whom the Lord will say, “well done, thou good and faithful servant!”

I love all y’all in the love of Christ,
Pastor Rick Rosenkrans





Joel and Kimberly Cleveland

Joel and Kimberly Cleveland live in Royal Harbor, Tavares.

Both Kimberly and Joel were born and raised in Kenosha, WI. They both attended Tremper High School, but different years, so they never met in high school. Kim attended UW Parkside and has a degree in Communication and Art. Joel attended Gateway Technical College and has a degree in Food Service Management and Tool Machining.

They met at Joel's church at a youth "fill the pew" night. Kim was a guest of another friend, and she was actually supposed to meet a different guy there, who didn't show up. The group of youth went out for pizza afterwards and everyone thought Kim was Joe's date. They ended up dating and were engaged 6 months later and married 6 months after that. They were married on June 26, 1981. They have one son, Joshua, married to Stacie.

Kimberly was employed as a graphic designer before retirement. Joel worked for Chrysler, and when laid off from there, he worked as a chef. After moving to Florida, they owned a kitchen utensil business and would sell at flea markets and conventions. They worked for five years doing after-care together at St. Paul's Catholic School until the pandemic hit.

They decided they had enough of WI winters and followed their son's lead and moved to Florida full-time in the fall of 2011.

Kimberly took up watercolor painting after being laid off due to the pandemic and paints mostly portraits of people. She also enjoys riding her electric bicycle. Joe enjoys cooking and playing ping pong, and enjoys his electric bike. He also enjoys a good cigar.

They both enjoy how welcoming everyone is at Grace. Everyone is very friendly and always makes you feel at home. Their hopes for the future are to see the church grow, win people to Christ and continue to be welcoming to all who enter.





Bonnie Maddox—1st
Phyllis Long—11th
Molly Bod—12th
John Ernest—16th
Jeff Carpenter—25th
Don Shearer—25th
Noah Klee—30th

Connect with us on
 FaceBook at

**Facebook.com/
 GraceEPCLeesburg**



Watch live streams, be encouraged, and stay in
 the loop with what's going on at Grace!

Please feel free to share with friends!!

facebook®



**Last
 Friday
 Women's
 Breakfast**

**March 31st at 8:30am
 at Wolfy's in Leesburg**



Pastor John Fraser
Pastor Rick Rosenkrans
Jack Homoney (2023)
Wally Klee, Sr. (2023)
Marvin Pool (2023)
Shelby Reed (2024)
Al Rode, Jr. (2023)
Judy Scott (2025)
Jim Teets (2024)



Prayer Time with Pastor John

**March 2nd & 16th
 at 1:00pm**

Tell us how we can pray for you!
 GraceEPCLeesburg@gmail.com
 (352) 552-0052.



**The Widow's
 Luncheon
 will be on**

Thursday, March 16th at 11:30am
at Mikey's Restaurant in front of Plantation
 Please let Sue know if you are attending by
 Sunday, March 12

20 YEARS OF IMPACT



ETHIOPIA ACT

Dear Friends,
Ethiopia ACT's two decades of ministry to the sickest and poorest of Addis Ababa is hard to believe. ACT grew from basic care for people with HIV, to being an organization that tests cutting-edge strategies and brings life-changing impact. When we think back over these years, the thing that stands out the most is God's goodness and provision, both to us and to the amazing people we have been called to love and serve.

Fear and Stigma - Can you remember what the world was like twenty years ago? Instead of Covid, it was HIV/AIDS. Africa was the pandemic epicenter and dire predictions about the future of the continent were everywhere. Donors debated the ability of Africans to properly take HIV medications. Could Africans tell time? Was treatment cost effective? Was treatment for everyone even realistic? In 2002 HIV was a death sentence.



Compassion and Care – ACT stepped in where no one else worked; caring for people dying of HIV/AIDS. Searching out the sickest and poorest of Addis Ababa and offering generous love and care. Sitting beside the beds of people dying, ACT provided palliative care, eased suffering, helped the dying plan for their children's futures, and shared hope through the Gospel. We learned and got better at caring for the sick, treating opportunistic infections and often extending life. Short-term medical teams provided needed care and knowledge. We cared for whole families and generously met needs like safer housing and better nutrition.

Treatment and Hope – In 2005 free HIV treatment changed everything. ACT designed and piloted HIV treatment support for Ethiopia. Partnering with the Ethiopian government, the World Health Organization and USAID, we helped 15,000 patients a year for three years, and launched a pediatric treatment program. Treatment meant fewer deaths, fewer orphans and a turn toward the future and planning for life instead of death. Treatment also reduced new infections and gave hope that HIV could be controlled.





Change and Impact – As Addis Ababa grew, the slum communities and families ACT served were being displaced. ACT helped these families prepare by training them to start small businesses or learn skills for a job. With HIV now a manageable disease, ACT expanded beyond HIV. Still focusing on the sickest and poorest, ACT cared for families affected by other illnesses like tuberculosis, cancer and mental illness. New strategies included enrolling families in a Community-Based Health Insurance program, opening savings accounts, and helping purchase homes.

Experiment and Measure – Making sure that everything ACT does results in real impact has always been a core value. Early on we tracked mortality and morbidity. Were our HIV positive members surviving and staying healthy? Were our children staying in school and succeeding? Were our members becoming more self-supporting? How much money were they saving? What was their HIV viral load? ACT built tools to track and measure important metrics and trained our Family Advocates to use them. Good data means being able to spot trends, measure effectiveness and provide quality care.



So Far – More than 2,200 families have been loved and supported. 80% are now self-supporting. Seventy young people have finished university or trade school, and 23 are currently enrolled. More than 95% of our HIV positive members have undetectable viral loads and are still on first-line treatments. Six churches have been planted and two bible studies launched that we hope will grow into churches. This year, ACT helped 1,500 high-school girls improve their school attendance and performance by supplying monthly feminine hygiene supplies. Over 200 families displaced by war were assisted with housing, food, blankets, and other supplies.

Help the ACT team continue this high-impact work. Help us serve another 2,200 families and transform lives from sickness to health and from poverty to self-sufficiency. The generosity we experienced over the last twenty years has touched thousands of people, rescued families from generational poverty, kept parents alive to raise their children and brought hope and life. Help keep this going!

J. Andrew Warren

Andrew Warren
Founder and Executive Director

Stay in Touch and Get Involved!

Check out our refreshed website at www.ethiopiaact.org and our new video about ACT's 20 years of impact.

P.O. Box 120338

Nashville, TN 37212

email: info@ethiopiaact.org

Now it is March and in February we had our annual congregational meeting. As usual the finance part of the meeting was brief and for that I apologize. I wasn't really thinking about it until we arrived, so I didn't have my thoughts together. However, there is something that I wish I had thought to reinforce for you. That is, first, that the Stewardship & Finance Committee is open to any member of the church and that we usually meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month. Also, as a group we feel that it is vitally important that you are comfortable with and supportive of the way the church handles its finances. The church asks for a share of the gifts that God has provided to you, so, it is only fitting that you are comfortable with how it is used. Lastly, questions are always welcome and when asked just might get you even more information that might be helpful.

My next subject was also mentioned during our meeting. That is that we are running out of room. Now, I am confident that the vast majority of you are very comfortable with our current configuration. However, we must be considerate of those that may seek to join us. Studies have found that churches that regularly fill 80% of the available seats are not comfortable for strangers. We as individuals tend to want what is referred to as personal space. However, while we don't usually mind if that space is invaded by a friend or acquaintance, we can be very uncomfortable when it is invaded by a stranger. So, when our seating is full, a new attendee that maybe found us on the web and came to try us out could easily be turned off by having to sit right next to someone they hadn't even met. Given that there is no space into which we can expand our current facility I will remind you that the Church owns 2.6 acres fronting on US 27 about 2 miles south of our current location on which we can build a larger facility. Also, I will remind you that within the next 5 years, (the timing is mine based on what I have seen since I arrived in this area) there will be an additional 55,000 residents in the area south of us and on both sides of US 27. That number is supported by the number of homes that have been already platted and permitted by the city of Leesburg.

On average we spend 40+ years accumulating assets, then another 15 years or so trying to conserve those assets, so we don't outlive them. But, given all those years of focus, very little, if any, time is spent planning for their distribution when we no longer need them. I think that most of us are afraid to admit that we will ultimately die. But, death is inevitable and refusing to plan for it will not change that fact. Perhaps it's time to consider making a provision in your will for your church or other ministry or charity that is important to you. Your Will states your charitable intentions and provides the opportunity to express your faith and stewardship. It's up to you to make sure your final statement reflects your faith and your values. But, your will is just one way to accomplish this. There are also charitable trusts, or endowments that can be used to further the mission of our church.

Closing thought. We have all been blessed with "more than enough". With that we should be looking for a way to leave something for the generations to come and for me it is a dream for our church. To build a financial base that will support the regular needs of the church, so that all giving can be used to reach out to others. Or, stated another way, in support of our "Mission". Wouldn't it be nice to have the problem of trying to decide how best to use our resources to support others without having to worry about whether we would actually collect what we had planned to spend?

In the Spirit of Christ,
Dave Hoffmeyer
for the Stewardship & Finance Committee



March 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 9:45am Women's Bible Study 3:30pm Choir Rehearsal Bonnie Maddox Birthday	2 1:00pm Prayer Time with Pastor John	3	4
5 Communion Sunday 9:00am Sunday School 9:45am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship	6 10:00am GriefShare 6:30pm Royal Highlands Small Group	7 8:00am Perkins Men's Bible Study	8 9:45am Women's Bible Study 3:30pm Choir Rehearsal	9 10:00am Finance Committee Meeting 10:30am Plantation Small Group	10	11 Phyllis Long Birthday
12 9:00am Sunday School 9:45am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship Molly Bod Birthday	13 10:00am GriefShare 6:30pm Royal Highlands Small Group	14 8:00am Perkins Men's Bible Study	15 9:45am Women's Bible Study 3:30pm Choir Rehearsal	16 11:30am Widow's Luncheon 1:00pm Prayer Time with Pastor John John Ernest Birthday	17	18
19 9:00am Sunday School 9:45am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship	20 10:00am GriefShare 6:30pm Royal Highlands Small Group	21 8:00am Perkins Men's Bible Study 10:00am Session Meeting Bob Russell Birthday	22 9:45am Women's Bible Study	23 10:30am Plantation Small Group	24	25 Jeff Carpenter Birthday Don Shearer Birthday
26 9:00am Sunday School 9:45am Coffee & Fellowship 10:30am Worship	27 10:00am GriefShare 6:30pm Royal Highlands Small Group 6:30pm Royal Harbor Small Group	28 8:00am Perkins Men's Bible Study	29 9:45am Women's Bible Study 3:30pm Choir Rehearsal	30 Noah Klee Birthday	31 8:30am Women's Breakfast	

A Missions Update from Shelby...

I am happy to report that we are able to continue our quarterly donations to each of our local and international Mission Partners. Unfortunately, we were unable to increase our contributions, but thankfully we can continue at the same amount as the past years. We were not able to add any new Mission Partners but we thank God for being able to continue with the ones we have.

Thank you for participating in the Baby Bottle drive for the pregnancy center at CCC. As soon as we know the amount of donations that we collected, we will let you know.

It is time to remind you of our annual Children's Christmas Shoe Boxes. Now is the time to start watching for all the sales that will be going on in our local stores. Last year we collected 96 Boxes. Praying we can top that this coming year. Everyone that came to pack boxes had a wonderful time and experienced a very joyous time.

I cannot thank all of you enough for the help and support you have provided to our missions.

In Jesus love,
Shelby Reed




March Sermon Schedule

Mar 5th The Letter of Jude—Part 1

Mar 12th Our Promise From God

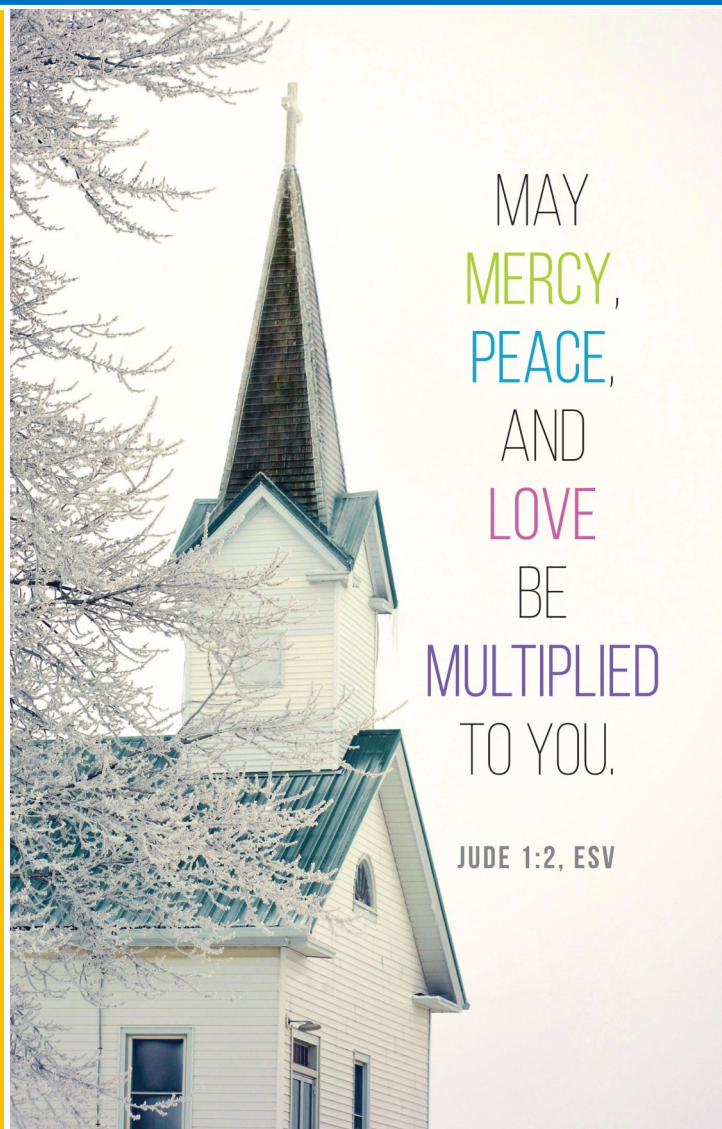
Mar 19th The Letter of Jude—Part 2

Mar 26th Jesus: Meek or Radical?



Jesus answered them,
“Destroy this temple,
and in three days
I will raise it up.”

John 2:19



MAY
MERCY,
PEACE,
AND
LOVE
BE
MULTIPLIED
TO YOU.

JUDE 1:2, ESV



Song of Solomon
2:12, NRSV

The
flowers
appear
on the
earth,
the
time of
singing
has come.

The Beginning of Spring

*The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.
“Song of Solomon 2:12”*

The garden trimming and planting will begin and we will be watching the beautiful flowers spring forward.

Pocket Crosses are another way we reach out to those in need of that assurance. A pocket cross can be carried in our pocket or purse or under our pillow at night, giving us constant assurance that we are not alone.

Your Prayer Shawl Committee wishes to minister to all ages, adults, babies, and older children. Recipients wrapped in prayerful love know that they are never alone for God is with them.

Reminder! These “Gifts of Love” are for the whole community, members and non-members. Please contact a member of the Prayer Shawl Committee if you know of someone in need of a “Gift of Love”. Prayer Shawl Request Cards may be found in the back of the chairs in the sanctuary. Please fill one out if you would like to share a “Gift of Love” with someone in need.

Blessings from your Prayer Shawl Committee,
Molly Bod, Mary Arnold, Alice Crotty, Connie Deatherage, Gail Edelman, Peggy Ernest, Jill Fraser, Jean Howse-Henke, Susy Quiggle, Lois Schielke, Judy Scott, Shirley Robertson





Worship: 700 S. 9th St., Leesburg, FL

Mailing: P. O. Box 490001

Leesburg, FL 34749

352-552-0052

Email: GraceEPCLeesburg@gmail.com

Website: GraceEPC.church

Like us on Facebook: Grace EPC

All activities are tentative and subject to change.

SUNDAYS:

- 9:00 AM ~ Sunday School
- 9:45 AM ~ Fellowship Time
- 10:30 AM ~ Worship Service

MONDAYS:

- 10:00 AM ~ GriefShare (1/9—4/3)
- 6:30 PM ~ Royal Highlands Small Group
- 6:30 PM ~ Royal Harbor Small Group (3/13 & 3/27)

TUESDAYS:

- 8:00 AM ~ Men's Bible Study & Breakfast @ Perkins
- 10:00 AM ~ Session Meeting (3/21)

WEDNESDAYS:

- 9:45 AM ~ Women's Bible Study
- 2:30 PM ~ Villages Small Group—On break until 4/18
- 3:30 PM ~ Choir Rehearsal

THURSDAYS:

- 10:00 AM ~ Stewardship & Finance Committee Meeting (3/9)
- 10:30 AM ~ Plantation Small Group (3/9 & 3/23)
- 11:30 AM ~ Widow's Luncheon (3/16)
- 1:00 PM ~ Prayer Time with Pastor John (3/2 & 3/16)

FRIDAYS:

- 8:30 AM ~ Last Friday Women's Breakfast (3/31)

SATURDAYS: