Sunday Mornings at Grace

January 1 - Happy New Year
All three morning services will meet as usual.
Pastor Don’s message at all services: “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow”
Start the New Year right by fellowshipping and worshipping with the Family of God.

January 8 - Pastor Don’s Final Sunday as “Senior Pastor”
Pastor Don’s morning message, which he will give in all three services, will be on “The Great Commission” that concludes the Gospel of Matthew. His message will be, “Onward to the Task Before Us!”
This will be a “Communion” Sunday morning, when the church family is invited to come forward to receive the Bread and the Cup and symbolize our recommitment to Christ and his body in the New Year that is before us.

Communion of the Bread and Cup

January 15 - Life Groups Sunday
Pastor Steve & Bob speak on “God is Never Done with Us” (Philippians 1: 1-11)

January 22
Pastor Steve & Bob speak on “Living a Gospel-Centered Life” (Philippians 1: 12-30).

January 29
Pastor Steve will speak on “What Christian Humility Is” (Philippians 2: 1-11).

A Personal Introduction...

This is the last newsletter I will contribute to as your Senior Pastor. Thank you for reading and pondering my thoughts over the years—agree or disagree. I have always looked forward to this monthly time of sharing.

I hope you will join me in the last two Sundays of my ministry—January 1 and January 8. I especially invite you to “A Night for Remembering” on Sunday evening, January 8. Details are below.

With love to you as your pastor, privileged to be so for almost 28 years,

“A Heritage of Song” – January 8 at McGaugh School Auditorium (7:00 – 8:30 PM)
We plan to celebrate the rich musical heritage of our church in a magnificent way that evening. The gathering is open to everyone—church family, your friends, the public, the Seal Beach community, and other churches.
Will you mark this date down and look forward to it?

January Calendar
To view the full January calendar visit our church website or find a copy on the 2nd floor on the info table.

Updates from the Congregational Business Mtg.
At our November 2011 Congregational Business Meeting, the proposed budget of $1,093,027 for 2012 was approved.
Also, Bob Wissmann and Jim Preusch were approved for a 3 year term on the Elder Board.

Welcome to our Newest Members
When Scott and Regina McWhirter moved to Seal Beach they soon found our church.
This young couple has been very faithful attendees at our 8:00 service ever since, and we are pleased they have made their decision to join our church. May our church bless them and may they be a blessing to us!

Bible Verse of the Month
For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29: 11 NIV
Quotes from a Newspaper Interview

The Press-Telegram interviewed me concerning my upcoming retirement. Here are a few statements I share with you (many didn't end up in the published article):

The most life changing experience since becoming a pastor —

"My adjustment coming from a conservative Midwest culture to minister in the highly secular and religiously diverse culture of S. California. The 'Jesus Movement' was going on in 1970, and I came to accept it as a genuine movement of God. It took me about three years to extricate myself from my fundamentalist cultural mindset, which I absolutely HAD to do if I wanted to be effective in a diverse, secular context like S. Cal."

What do you think you will miss most?

"I will miss having the only designated parking spot! Really, I will miss the weekly preaching and worship leading, and the warm greetings before and after services, and leading with a great team of staff and lay leaders."

Will you continue to be active at Grace?

"I will be 'Pastor Emeritus'. I will take a planned two-month absence so I and the church can move on without me being in a leadership role. After that break, I am there to serve in helpful ways desired by the future leadership. Some visitation and teaching ministries are likely. But no complaining to me about anything!"

Pastors tend to have a key message they try to get across to parishioners no matter what the key subject of a sermon is. What has been your message over the years?

"(1) Keep politics out of the church! Whoever is accepted by Jesus is acceptable to us. Our bond in Christ must be stronger than any political, racial, cultural or social bond. The church should be the one place where a liberal Democrat and conservative Republican can join hands and sing, 'We are one in the bond of love.' That is the witness to the world the church must have. (None of this means we don't address moral or social issues when we believe a particular conviction helps build a good society.)"

"(2) Stand up for religious liberty. For years I have devoted myself to 'the church in society' issues and especially to religious liberty, which I fear is always under threat, both by the 'Religious Right' and (worse) by the 'secular left.' Religious liberty isn't just the right to worship—it includes the right to live out your faith freely in society, to evangelize, and to strive to influence the world. And defending religious liberty means standing up for the rights of others, not just for my own religious beliefs and practices."

Please add anything else you would like.

"I have learned that having a Christian faith rooted in traditional orthodoxy does not mean that I shouldn't build bridges of communication and cooperation with those of different religious traditions, to promote peace and understanding and the common good."

"I have learned that there is more to true Christian confession than the narrow confines of my earlier fundamentalism. I will worship with others who genuinely confess the great ecumenical Christian creeds."

"I have learned that we constantly need to be debating what moral issues should remain within the church and what issues should be supported or opposed outside the church for the good of the broader society we live in."

A Christmas Blessing to the Community (from the Seal Beach SUN, December 15, 2011)

This Thanksgiving and Christmas Season I give special thanks to the people of Seal Beach and Grace Community Church.

Thirty-five years ago, January of 1977, my wife Mary, our two children and I stepped into what was then “Grace Brethren Church” at 8th and Central for the very first time. We were simply visitors. We decided to stay. Little did I know or even fathom that I might become the pastor of Grace Church and remain in that role for almost 28 years!

But it happened. In 1984 the church’s members welcomed me as their new pastor. We renamed the church “Grace Community Church” in 1985 because we intended to be truly a “community” church in every meaningful sense of that word. For example, we have offered several “9/11” remembrances including last September 11, when 700 of you came to remember the terrible events of that day on its tenth anniversary. In the spirit of a verse from the Bible that drives my ministry (Jeremiah 29:7), we seek the well-being of the community where God has placed us.

Now I look ahead just one more month to when I will retire as the church’s senior pastor.

So this Christmas season is especially poignant to me. I thank this community for the special recognition at the Christmas parade. Much more seriously, the season will be a special challenge to the families, friends and co-workers of the victims at Meritage Salon, many of whom I’ve had opportunity to serve. We should all uphold them in prayer and in as many ways as possible especially at this season of the year.
Sometime around 1999 the church’s board recommended I find an avenue of community service. This led to contacts with the police department. I studied and prepared a chaplaincy program for the department and it was my privilege to be installed as chaplain for the Seal Beach Police Department in October of 2001. Today we have two chaplains. Our opportunities to serve the department and community are many—most significantly the comfort ministries we offered on and after October 12.

I’m not riding into one of our beautiful sunsets! I will become the church’s “pastor emeritus” and stay to support its new leadership. I will seek opportunities to serve the community and I look forward to devoting more time as a chaplain.

I want to take this opportunity to do two things. First, to express my love and appreciation to my church and to this community.

Second, to invite all of you to “A Heritage of Song” at 7:00 on Sunday evening, January 8. It will be at McGAugh School Auditorium. Good music runs deep in my heart, and we will present a program representing the excellence in music I’ve sought to nourish in my church over the past 28 years. A special feature will be bringing back together the “Community Messiah Choir” which presented Handel’s “The Messiah” to the community in the 1990’s.

I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas, a peaceful and prosperous New Year and all the best God has to offer.

**THIS MONTH’S SERMON**

**ENCORE**

“When they [the shepherds] had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child…but Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” (Luke 2:17, 19 NIV)

Proclaiming is important. So is pondering. Sometimes Christians can be judgmental of those who ponder (studying and thinking and meditating) as if they simply aren’t doing God’s work. “They should be out proclaiming!” Or the judgment is on the “proclaimers”. “They should learn to ‘get alone with God’ and meditate more.”

Perhaps “post-modern Christians” are more into pondering. So it seems, from all the attention being given to meditation and the contemplative life. Contemplators tend to be spiritual introverts—nothing wrong with that.

Throughout much of my ministry the emphasis has been on proclamation. Proclaimers tend to be spiritual extroverts. Nothing wrong with that either. Perhaps Paul’s words are appropriate: “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another” (Romans 14:13).

From Luke’s account of the shepherds’ visit to baby Jesus we should learn that there is a need for both proclamation and pondering. And, while all Christians should know how to share their faith and all Christians should be students of the Word, perhaps God gifts some Christians to focus on proclamation and others to devote their time to pondering.

The Christmas Story teaches us the value of both. God bless your efforts to “proclaim” and the time you spend “pondering” what God is doing in the world through his Son.

(From Pastor Don’s notes for his sermon on “The Angels’ Song”, December 11, 2011)

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Taking a Look Back

Pastors at Our Church’s 50th Anniversary Banquet on February 13, 1994 on the Queen Mary.


To view this photo in a larger format please visit us on our Facebook page.
THANK YOU PASTOR DON
In 1984, Ronald Reagan was our president. Barack Obama had just graduated from Columbia. The Apple Macintosh was introduced. The Summer Olympics were held in Los Angeles. And Don Shoemaker became the Senior Pastor of Grace Community Church. In this short article I cannot describe, much less express our profound appreciation, for Pastor Don's countless contributions to our church, our congregation, and our community over the past almost 28 years. It is very fitting that Pastor Don was just proclaimed Seal Beach Citizen of the Year. Fortunately many of us had the opportunity to express our thanks by notes and letters that were presented in book form to Pastor Don and Mary at our Thanksgiving Three-fold Communion. There will be more opportunities to thank Pastor Don, particularly on January 8 as he delivers his final sermon as Senior Pastor, or is celebrated at "A Heritage in Song." If you miss those chances, soon-to-be Emeritus Pastor Don and Mary will be around with us for years to come. God bless you Pastor Don and Mary.

RESOLVE TO SERVE
Are you still thinking about your New Year's resolutions? If you haven't filled your plate with more resolutions than you possibly can keep, perhaps there is room for one more for 2012, and this is one you can keep. How about resolving to find ways to serve, or increase your level of service, to the church? We are going into 2012 with lean staffing and a tight budget. The church has never needed volunteers as much as we do now. Our church has many ministries, and that means there are many needs and opportunities for service. We constantly need more help in the Children’s Ministry, growing and nurturing our precious young ones. We need greeters, ushers, Life Group leaders, office volunteers, Stephen’s Ministers, singers and musicians — the list goes on and on.

So once again, the challenge from our leadership to our members and regular attenders is to find a place to put your gifts to work, and start serving. And if you do that, the great thing is not only will you find deep satisfaction in service, but there is a real chance you will find you love it! Please just ask anyone on staff, anyone on leadership, or call me, as to where, and how, you can serve. Thank you.

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. . . ” 1 Peter 4:10.

Elder Board News

Thank you!
Mark Berry
Chair, Elder Board

Seal Beach Christmas Parade
On Friday, December 2, Seal Beach had its 33rd Annual Christmas Parade down Main Street. It was a wonderful evening filled with singing, laughter and love. Pastor Don and his family rode down the parade route as he was recognized as Citizen of the Year by Cypress College. Also, on route was the church float filled with many of our members and G-Kids singing Christmas Carols, while people along the route sang along with them. What a great way to share the birth of Christ with so many people. To view photo’s from the Christmas Parade visit us on Facebook.

Christmas at Grace
What a wonderful Christmas we had. We had so many wonderful joyful ways to celebrate Jesus’ birthday!

We started with the Seal Beach Christmas Parade, then our children sharing the good news through music. The “Let Heaven & Nature Swing 2” dessert theater shared the story of Christ’s coming in a special way and then the Christmas Eve services were a time for all to come together and celebrate the Savior’s birth. We ended the Christmas season with two heart-warming Christmas Day services.

Thank you to all who were involved and may God bless you all in the new year!

To view photo’s from the Christmas Eve services, visit us on Facebook.
WOMEN’S MINISTRY

Women of Grace District Retreat
A group of eleven women from our church participated in this annual November event held at Calvary Chapel Conference Center in Murrieta. Generally 200 women from Southern California participate each year and this year was no exception. This year there were also two groups of women from Northern California who joined us.

Carol Wolaver, the pottery lady, served as the featured speaker for the occasion. We were challenged as she shared how the Lord has worked powerfully in her own life. A true servant of the Lord, her dynamic and inspirational ministry significantly impacted all who heard her.

Women’s Bible Study
The Practice of Godliness by Jerry Bridges is the title of our upcoming study. “Godliness is a foundational spiritual quality that makes the entire Christian life dynamic, effective and pleasing to God. Growing in godliness is a two fold process. It involves an ever-deepening devotion to God and developing a character that is steadily transformed into His likeness.” - Jerry Bridges

Our Tuesday evening study will begin Jan. 17 at 6:30 and our Friday morning study will begin Jan. 20 at 9:30. Both studies will meet in the library. Come up the back stairs. Study guides and books will be available at the Women’s Ministry table after services on January 8 and 15. Cost: $18.50. This is a moderately in-depth study.

Impressions
Our Mommy and Me program will resume on Wednesday, January 11, in the Worship Center from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. ‘Jesus is My Friend’ is the theme for the children’s time while the moms will continue their study of “A Mother After God’s Own Heart” by Elizabeth George. This program is geared for moms/grandmothers with children/grandchildren from ages 2 to 5.

Women’s Day (and evening) Retreat – Saturday, March 24
Consider treating yourself to a fun, get-away day with others. Occasional events such as this are vital to help us to maintain a healthy perspective and balance in life with all of its continual demands and responsibilities. We will enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center in Rancho Palos Verdes once again. Our theme will be ‘How’s Your Game?’ Our speakers will be a team of local women and our worship sessions will be led by Dorothy Wineman. Lunch and dinner will be included. Cost will be under $60. Plan now to attend and invite a friend to come along with you!

World Impact News

Women of Grace
If you missed the time with David Bayne in December, you have one last chance! Join the Women of Grace on January 11th to hear from David what the Lord has been doing in Buenos Aires Argentina. Keep an eye out in the Sunday bulletins for more details.

Missions Commission
You keep wondering to yourself, “What is a Missions Commission and what does it do?” Well, now is the time to find out! Join us on January 15th at 12:30pm in the Coral Room to get updates about our missionaries and how we can support and encourage them.

Write to missions@gracesealbeach.org for more information.

11:00AM Adult Bible Study

At 11:00 am, you may not be aware, there is an Adult Study Class for you to join and participate in. This class is taught by Glenn Koons, retired teacher and pastor. We welcome all adults to come share their faith, the Bible, and topics that affect us all in 2012.
Hello Everyone and Welcome to January 2012

I pray that you had a wonderful Christmas season and looking forward to all the great things this year will bring. Is it just me or does it seem that the whole year goes slow until we start the Holidays in October and then it zoom’s by? I just hang on, try to keep up and enjoy the wild ride.

A new year and that means a new slate which holds the untold tales of 365 days. We are the authors that create and write those stories. I am always excited about January and anxious to know what tales the New Year will unfurl for me. Sometimes I am really ready to leave behind those that happened in the previous year. Writing down resolutions is the best we can do to try to accomplish a lot of things (paper doesn’t have to be involved, word documents, e-mails, texts, are all in order). There is something about the written word that seems to impress our Psyche. It also gives one a measuring stick to see how well those goals were accomplished at the end of the year. Looking back through past years can show us how much we have personally grown and a sense of accomplishment.

January 8th we will be celebrating Pastor Don’s years of service to our church family. He has chosen a night of song for everyone to enjoy with him. It will be a definite event not to miss so please mark your calendars Now! McEachin School Auditorium is where this evening filled with song will take place. There will be plenty of room for all of the church family and you are encouraged to bring friends and family with you to enjoy this very special event.

If I was to forecast the coming year I would have to say it will be a year filled with change. Just an educated guess since Pastor Don is retiring, Pastor Steve will step into his shoes and Pastor Bob into Steve’s. I am requesting that all of us put these men and our church on our yearlong prayer list. Transition is never easy or quick so we all need to be patient and supportive. Growing pains and not always being comfortable will be felt so please expect them. Pastor Don has been a very strong leader for 28 years and someone else filing and stepping into his shoes will take some time for all of us to get used to. We are so fortunate that we have Pastor Steve and Pastor Bob who have been at our church for as long as they have, so they know how everything works and we all know them. As my mother always said, “As long as we are all together we can weather any storm!” AMEN!

OK Grace Buddies that’s it for this month. I pray you have a terrific year and that your walk with the Lord will grow and provide abundant life to you and your house in 2012.

See you around Grace Grazie Mille & Ciao, Elena Grana

TROOPS CORNER

In early December the Support Our Troops team packed up and shipped off 655 care packages for our soldiers in Afghanistan. This effort is just as successful as our shipments in 2010! In addition to the care packages we also mailed 14 boxes of toiletries, shampoo, bath gel and donated magazines and Girl Scout cookies. These shipments went to all four companies of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry; the 190th Mobility Augmentation Company (Tenn. Nat. Guard); and the 785th Military Police Battalion. We say “thank you” to the members of the packing teams, to the letter and card writers, to those who donated the cookies and magazines, and to those whose cash donations provided for postage. What a wonderful way for the Support Our Troops mission to end 2011.

Our first monthly meeting of 2012 will be on January 15, in the Offshore Room at 12:30. Come join us as we plan our program for the New Year, which may be our last if the troop wind-down happens in Afghanistan.
Winter Camp 2012

Hello Sunday Schoolers!

It’s time to sign up for Winter Camp 2012! Any third through fifth grader is welcome to attend. We will be going back to Alpine Camp and Conference Center in Blue Jay. I have already reserved our spaces so the registration fee will be $140 per camper. We will be attending Junior Winter Weekend #1 ~ January 27-29 with Mr. J.

A registration form is on the back. Please turn in your forms and fees by January 3. To keep the costs down, families will be driving their own campers to and from the camp. Please let me know if anyone is interested in carpooling with another family. A welcome letter, packing list and map will follow after registration is received.

Hope to see you at camp!
Ms. Cindy
ALPINE CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER
JUNIOR WINTER 2012
Registration Form/Health History
A separate form is to be completed for each camper/guest and counselor

Junior #1
January 27-29, 2012

Junior #2
February 3-5, 2012

Junior #3
February 10-12, 2012

Please return this form with payment to your church or to Alpine if attending as an individual
A $30 processing fee will be charged for all cancellations

(Please Print Clearly)
Camper/Counselor’s Name: ___________________________ Male ____ Female ____

Church Affiliation: __________________________________________

Current Grade: ___________________ Birth Date: ____________

Mailing Address: __________________________________________

City/State/Zip: ____________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Name (print): ________________________________

Home Phone: ___________ Work Phone: ___________ Cell Phone: ______

Email Address: ____________________________________________

1. Describe any activity restrictions while at camp. Write "none" if you don’t have any.

2. Describe any past medical treatments relevant to participating in camp activities. Write "none" if you don’t have any.

3. Describe any allergies or dietary restrictions. Write "none" if you don’t have any.

4. Approximate date of last Tetanus Shot: ___________ Are other immunizations current? Yes ____ No (Make notes on back)

5. List all medications sent to camp. (All medications must be sent in the prescription bottle with label.)

6. May Tylenol, Benadryl, Cough Drops or Tums be administered? Yes ____ No ____ Date of last medical exam: ________

7. Describe any current medical and/or behavioral conditions that require medications, treatment, or special restrictions while at camp. Write "none" if you don’t have any.

For Campers/Counselors over age 18 only: ___ I decline to provide the requested health information.

Camper/Counselor Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________

Alpine must be notified of campers that have been exposed to any communicable diseases prior to camp.

Physician’s Name/Address/Phone: ____________________________

Medical Insurance Company: __________________ Policy Number: ______

Emergency Contact (other than Parent/Guardian): __________________ Relationship: ______

Home Phone: ___________ Work Phone: ___________ Cell Phone: ______

PARENTS/GUARDIANS PLEASE READ, SIGN & DATE THE FOLLOWING:
I, the undersigned, hereby give permission for the above child to attend this camp sponsored by Alpine Camp and Conference Center. I agree to hold harmless Alpine or its agents for any and all claims for injuries, illness, and incidents that result from the rendering of emergency medical aid, or liability related to the use or participation in any camp activities. The activities may include, but are not limited to, swimming, ropes course, rock climbing, tower, paintball, and all other recreational activities. I also give permission for participation in any offsite activities during camp and/or to be transported to and from any offsite activities, or emergency locations, if any, by authorized vehicles. In the event that I cannot be reached in an emergency and my child requires treatment, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by the camp administration to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injections, anesthetics, or surgery for my child, as named in this registration form. I also give permission to photograph and video my child for any future promotional materials, including Alpine’s website postings, with cooperation of compensation.

Camper/Counselor/Guest Signature: (If over age 18) ___________________________ Relationship: ______

Parent/Guardian Signature: ___________________________ Relationship: ______

For campers under the age of 18 a Parent/Guardian must fill out, sign and date this registration form with no additions, deletions or changes. Thank you.

An incredible time at Alpine Camp and Conference Center awaits everyone regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or religious preference.

ALPINE CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER
P.O. Box 155, Blue Jay, CA 92317
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