

Grace
Community
Church

Quarterly

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Featured Stories

Hoops for Hope Camp in Acuna, Mexico



On October 12-15, we took a team from Grace Community Church to Acuna to host a basketball camp for the students there. This trip brought back many fond memories of trips to Mexico I took as a college student when I first came to Grace. Because of the drug violence along the border, we had to stop taking these trips for years, but thankfully God has answered our prayers and allowed us to serve our neighbors to the south again.

Our team was Jose Iglesias, Tina Freeman, Maddy Myers, Susan Dubreuil, Katie Czap, Antonio Castro, Nate Frederickson, Rosie Stigler, and myself (Jonathan Scheffrahn).

When we arrived on Thursday, we met with a former member of Grace, Dennis Carroll (Grace member Betsy Krueger’s father), who runs a home for unwed pregnant teenage girls in Acuna. We made fifty bags of groceries and took them door to door in some of the poorer communities where we gave them away and prayed for people. The relaxed nature of the culture helped us tremendously as no one was in a hurry and many stopped to listen to what we had to say.

For most of the team, this was their first experience on a mission trip, and God really did empower many of our coaches to speak enough Spanish to adequately convey His heart. After praying for the people, we invited any students we met to come to our basketball camp the next day at a local park.



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We had a slow start on Friday with only a couple of kids coming to the camp. Undaunted, Rosie and Susan went to a nearby grocery store and invited families to come. While they were there, Rosie talked a local radio station into announcing the camp on the radio for us. I went with the local pastor to a nearby elementary school where a principal invited our whole team to do a mini camp that day at noon with her students.

At the end of our mini camp, we heard the principal encouraging all her students to spend time coming to the camp, hearing what we had to say, and doing some healthy activity.

We had some health issues on Friday because it was much hotter than anticipated. During the team’s prayer time that night, Katie specifically asked God for an overcast day the next day. You guessed it, when we arrived at the court it was a beautiful overcast day.

Continued on next page.

His blessing also extended to bringing us more people as word continued to spread about the camp. In our morning session on Saturday, we had almost 30 kids, and one of the boys, Martin, stood up to declare Jesus as his Lord for the first time (also the first time Antonio had ever led someone to trust in Christ).

Tina reported that her entire girls team prayed to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We gave out about ten of the Spanish bibles we had brought with the tabs that show you the Gospel in five easy steps. We made every child who wanted and received one of the Bibles promise to share the verses inside with another person, and they all eagerly agreed.

Since the morning session had been so full by our standards we thought the afternoon would be empty. We were wrong as a bunch of older boys came who had been invited through our efforts going door to door on Thursday. Overall we had another 25 in the afternoon and again had a great response.

Martin stood up to declare Jesus as his Lord for the first time.



All in all, we had almost 70 students participate in the camp in Acuna. We invited them all to the local church on Sunday and worshiped with them before returning to Texas. We hope to return to Acuna in the fall of 2018 for another camp!

THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY LEADS THE WAY IN HELPING CITIZENS PREPARE FOR, PREVENT, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS.

Arlington Christian Disaster Network Award

Outstanding Citizen Corps Partner Program Award

Awarded by FEMA

Last December FEMA awarded the Arlington Christian Disaster Network its 2017 Outstanding Citizen Partner Program Award, in recognition of what the ACDN does with the City of Arlington. Lea Ann and Billy Hirth were instrumental in forming ACDN and continuing our cooperative work in disaster response with the city. Here’s what the City of Arlington had to say about ACDN and the FEMA award:

Understanding that local government and public safety can quickly become overwhelmed in the face of emergencies, the City of Arlington Office of Emergency Management in Texas created a formal memorandum of agreement with the ACDN to manage spontaneous volunteers and assist with sheltering needs when disasters strike.

Established following a 2012 tornado, ACDN is a group of 17 local faith-based organizations that provide trained volunteers, ready to meet the needs of the community.

ACDN volunteers are required to complete Community Emergency Response Team basic training as a baseline for their volunteerism and are primarily responsible for the management and implementation of the city’s Volunteer Reception Centers and mass care shelters. ACDN’s commitment to hosting and managing mass care shelters takes a tremendous burden off the city during the aftermath of a disaster, as was evidenced in 2015 when a gas well site mishap caused the evacuation—and subsequent sheltering—of people in roughly 100 homes. And again in 2016, when ACDN’s Crisis Response Ministry deployed to Brazoria County to provide grief counseling to flood victims.

ACDN is active in all mission areas of emergency management and is a critical partner to the City of Arlington Office of Emergency Management.

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Toys for Mexico

Over the years, Pastor Jose Iglesias has been faithful to collect and hand-deliver toys to needy children and families in Mexico. As a church, we are excited to watch the Lord re-open the doors to ministry in Mexico. In 2017, the children from the summer VBS program donated hundreds of dollars to buy soccer balls, and our Youth Ministry collected and donated over \$1,000 towards buying shoes. Our church also donated numerous toys and shoes. Overall, Jose collected over 1,000 toys and 400 pairs of shoes for the families in Mexico.

In early January of 2018, Grace Youth Ministry took 20 students and four leaders to Acuna, Mexico, to help Jose pass out toys, shoes, and food. This student team organized the 400 pairs of shoes, handed out the toys, and prepared over 200 lunches and 75 bags of groceries to give away.



"I went to Mexico to provide and give to the needy in a practical and fun way. I truly gained a love for the people of Mexico. My biggest takeaway was that my heart for serving was strengthened."

– Baylor Lopez, Junior



STORY 03

TOYS FOR MEXICO / ACUNA, MEXICO

🕒 DECEMBER 2017 - JANUARY 2018



"I went to Mexico so I could really see what it's like to not have everything you want. My goal was to be humbled and to humble myself so I could step down from my privileges and give to those who really needed it. The biggest thing I gained was an awareness of things that happen outside my comfort bubble ... and realizing that there are practical things I can do to help. My favorite memory from the trip was connecting with one little girl in particular. She didn't speak much English and I didn't speak much Spanish ... but we were still able to laugh and communicate easily. She was always smiling, and even though we had our differences, we were similar. Overall it was a great trip and left an impact in the short amount of time we were there. I really got to know all the people who went on the trip and watch everyone serve. During the whole trip, I really felt God in our presence, helping us through any confusion or barriers."

– Taylor Morgan, Sophomore

As a church, we are excited to see how God continues to open doors to minister in Mexico for further trips like this one.

International Sunday



International Sunday is a dedicated time for Grace Community Church to celebrate the nations represented within our church body. As a church, we set aside the Sunday before Thanksgiving for special services that reflect the international flavor of our church, and we host the World Fair in the Life Center after both services.

The World Fair is simply a reflection of the diversity within Grace Community Church. Also, it gives an affirmation of what heaven will be like, as described in Revelation 7:9, where every nation, tribe, people, and language are represented. We ask church members who have a significant connection to another country or people group to represent their country or people group at the World Fair. Tables around the room give representatives a place to display pieces of their culture, give demonstrations, and hand out food samples. Dressing in clothing specific to their country is also encouraged. In 2017, 34 people groups from varying regions within 25 countries were represented. Over 450 people from Grace Community participated in the World Fair.

Also at the World Fair, we provided “passports” for children and adults to fill up with signatures from the World Fair tables. The passport holder had to learn a greeting in another language for each signature. There were also Geography Challenges in which participants identified all 34 countries represented at the World Fair on a map, and then matched the capital cities with country names. Successful completion of either activity earned a prize: the announcer, Ethan Duff, called winners onto the Prize Central stage where they rang the “Gong of Victory” and were awarded with a prize attached to a balloon. As Grace Community Church continues to grow, we are excited to see the countries represented within our church grow as well.



After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.

– Revelation 7:9





Focus Weekend

The Grace Youth Ministry hosts Focus on a weekend every fall! This is a favorite youth event with high energy games, small group discussion, biblical teaching, worship, and fellowship. In October 2017, over 100 high school students and 12 leaders stayed in 11 host homes of members of Grace Community Church throughout the Arlington area.

The theme of Focus was “Awaken.” This weekend challenged high school students to awaken their faith and reach their friends, neighbors, and classmates with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Also, students were challenged to boldly seek the advancement of God’s Kingdom at home and around the world. During the Saturday night worship service, often referred to as “Facedown,” 15 students choose to make a public commitment to follow the Lord. As Grace Youth Ministry grows, please continue to pray for these students!

“I experienced the Holy Spirit in a way I never had before. I felt led to pray for people with my entire being. I had never done that before. At the end of Focus after hours of in-depth prayer, I saw God move through my prayers. I saw results. I had never seen anything like that before.”

- Elijah Cavanaugh, Senior

“Coming into Focus, I already knew how I felt about the weekend because I had done it so many times before. When I went to Facedown, I did not want to be there anymore. I did not feel welcomed in the church ... I just wanted to go home. I went and talked to a few leaders and told them everything that was going on and the hurt that was in my life. What I realized for the first time was that you let God in, He can change your whole life. For the first time, I felt like I could breathe after feeling like Satan was choking me.”

- Katrina Williams, Junior



“At one point during Facedown, we were asked to go and start praying around the room. Five or six people all consecutively came and prayed for me. It was amazing because I knew these people, but the tone and words they were using told me it was coming from God. All their prayers lined up, and God was speaking to me through them.”

- Isaiah Andrews, Sophomore



Men of Grace Cookout



On November 4th, 2017, over 200 men gathered at Grace Community Church for our fall Men of Grace cookout! We enjoyed mountains of Texas slow-roasted barbecue pork and chicken with all the fixings, a raffle of some great “guy stuff” including a 55” TV, a GoPro camera, and a shotgun. The guest speaker was Olympic gold medalist Joe DeLoach who shared his story of becoming a world-class sprinter who became the only man to beat Carl Lewis in an individual Olympic final. That race was the pinnacle of his career, but even more important than that gold medal was his decision to give his life to Jesus Christ and serve Him for the rest of his life.



Women of Grace Chili Cook Off

Our Women of Grace know how to add some **spice** and turn up the **heat** when it comes to our annual Chili Cook-Off. From chili-tasting to boot-scootin' and pumpkin seed spitting (yes!) to s'mores roasting—the evening was seasoned with friendly competition, Christ-centered fellowship, and fun. The aroma of hearty chili recipes lingered in the air as sweet and savory conversations filled the night. A great “thyme” was had by all.

The Women of Grace Ministry loves to get away with God, focus on Jesus, praise and worship, pray ... and they also love to have fun! Mid-November was our second annual Chili Cook-off. The evening was full of over 40 varieties of handmade chili with all the side fixings and S'mores to top it off in our outdoor fire pit area. 85 ladies of all ages and backgrounds enjoyed prizes, contests, line-dancing, and a lot of fellowship with one another over bowls of great chili. We were so glad for a fun night together.



Women of Grace now have more opportunities than ever to spend time growing in our relationship with Christ and His Word, and learning how to love our neighbors in communities and around the world. We connect with information on our small groups, study groups, lunch and dinners, and large and small events through our ministry group on Realm and through our Facebook page ‘Women of Grace (Arlington),’ The Lord has graciously increased us in all ways, and we give thanks for all that He is doing!

New Member Highlight

Valerie Harris

Valerie Harris grew up in Mississippi, the second oldest of nine children. She was blessed to have both Christian parents and grandparents and was raised in a Baptist church. She accepted Jesus as her personal Savior at the age of 12. She remembers growing up thinking that God was an angry God, one who was upset at sin all the time, not the loving Father she learned about later.

While she always had food and the basics, there was not anything extra in their home. Her dad did not have the chance to go to college and so he really wanted that for Valerie. With his encouragement when she graduated high school, she went to the Mississippi University for Women and studied broadcasting (although she ended up spending most of her career in the IT and healthcare field).

As a young adult, Valerie was focused on the pursuits of this world. She went to church because she was worried if she didn't, God would be mad at her. She wanted a good job so she would have enough money and feel secure. All the time she was searching for something but didn't know until later that what she was looking for was a personal relationship with Jesus. After college, she remembers sitting on her couch and having the "random" thought, "I've never read the Bible." So she began reading the Bible starting in Genesis. While she didn't understand much of what she was reading, she was compelled to keep going. Later she found out that her sisters had joined a Spirit-filled church back in Mississippi and had been praying for her. At the time it occurred to her to read the Bible, her sisters had seen a vision of their sister and were praying for her. Soon after, Valerie moved back closer to home and began to reconnect with her family.



“All the time she was searching for something, but didn’t know until later that what she was looking for was a personal relationship with Jesus.”

A few years later while living in Atlanta, Valerie remembers watching a Christian television show where a pastor shared the gift of prophecy. She found out he had a church in the area and she went. They were having a prophetic night and asked if anyone in the crowd had never been prophesied over before. Valerie raised her hand and received a word from one of the elders. This particular word was specific in nature and foretold an encounter she would have two days later. She was amazed when the word came true, and it affirmed to her that God still speaks to His people today.

At this time she was connecting with a local church in Atlanta, but she kept mostly to herself. One day the pastor mentioned some of the counseling options available in their

church, and her first thought was that she knew a lot of people around her that needed some good counseling. Of course, the person who needed it the most was herself. Overcoming the stigma her peers had about counseling, she received healing for herself as well as training on how to help others.

In 2008-2009 the bottom fell out of the economy, and God brought her to Texas where there were jobs for people with her skill set in the IT industry. She owed about \$118,000 on her house in Atlanta, but at the time it was only worth approximately \$50k. She knew God wanted her to honor her commitment to the bank, so she proactively contacted the bank and told them she wanted to do the right thing. God honored her commitment, and she was able to sell her house. She not only incurred no losses but allowed her to walk away with \$1,000.

“In 2008-2009 the bottom fell out of the economy, and God brought her to Texas where there were jobs for people with her skill set in the IT industry.”

In 2011, she left for London to begin a new job and a new chapter in her life. The Wednesday before she was to begin, due to British government regulations, the company said she was not eligible for the job because she was not a British citizen. During her time while still in the UK, she received a word from the Holy Spirit that she would be teaching English as a Second Language. Because she couldn't find work, she returned to the United States and forgot about the word she had been given.

In January 2015, she returned to London to get a Bible degree, and while she was there she heard through the Spirit the word "TESOL." She googled it and found out it stands for "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages" and was reminded of the word she had received just four years earlier. It was at this same time that she received her calling to be a missionary. She believes that God is calling her to Germany. On a Thursday during the summer of 2017, she googled ESL and Arlington and found the email address of Rhoda Morgan, the director of ESL here at Grace Community Church. She wanted some experience teaching ESL and asked Rhoda if she could volunteer. Rhoda immediately invited her to come that very Saturday to the ESL training she was hosting at Grace Community Church. While at the ESL training she met a fellow teacher, Karen Ferris, who was German, and they began a friendship. They began meeting on Saturdays and Karen helps her learn German.

In addition to serving in the ESL ministry, she is also a regular for Global Prayer on Tuesday mornings when her work schedule allows.

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From LAUNCH to RE-ENTRY



Our church-based training for cross-cultural disciple-making is called LAUNCH, led by Brian Andrews. As a sending church, we help to equip people God is calling in overseas life and ministry. But as a sending church, we also need to be able to help those same people when they return to the USA and can have major adjustments trying to transition back to their ‘home’ culture. So I’m pleased to say that we are forming a new ministry as part of our cross-cultural outreach here at Grace Community. We call it Re-Entry, and it is led by Eddie and Donna Elliston.

Eddie and Donna have much experience and understanding of this issue. Having served as overseas workers for decades in several different countries, raised their children in those countries, and returned back to their country of origin, the Elliston’s are well suited to help us understand and address the unique needs of families in transition. They are also forming a team of others who want to serve our returning workers in this way.

Children and teens are especially affected by these movements between cultures, often not feeling at home in their ‘homeland’. We desire to give a ‘soft landing’ to them and make adjusting back to life in the USA as smooth as possible. Just being aware of the varied emotions they will feel and knowing it’s part of the normal ‘reverse culture shock’ experience can be a relief. We also want our church family to be sensitive to the stresses returning families are under and to reach out in ways that help, not hurt.

We’re pleased that Grace Community is adding this important element to our cross-cultural ministry. Please pray for the Elliston’s as they and the Re-Entry team begin to move forward. If you have an interest in this area and would like to offer help, please contact Eddie at ejelliston@gmail.com.



“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

– Matthew 28:18-20

Don't Be Stupid In 2018

What kind of year will it be for you? A year of wise decisions that produce growth and life, or a year of stupid decisions that end up costing you dearly? What will make the difference in the kind of year you will have in 2018? You will. It will be up to you.

Now, some of you might object at this point and argue that the Bible says that it is God who causes the growth. And you would be partly right. The most widely used metaphor for spiritual growth in the Bible is agricultural. In an agricultural setting, the farmer must work the land. He must work hard, he must plant and cultivate and harvest, but God must do His part. He must bring the rains and cause the sun to shine and photosynthesis and so forth.

We all know that some farms look great and produce much at harvest, while others look horrible and are full of weeds and thorns. The difference between those two fields on the same road is not God. The farmers are the difference. You are the farmer of your spiritual life. God will do His part, but you must do your part. What is our part in spiritual growth? We must each choose to seek the Lord! The stupidest thing that you can do in 2018 is not seek the Lord. And those aren't my words, those are God's words.

Jer 10:21 "...the shepherds have become stupid and have not sought the Lord; Therefore they have not prospered, and all their flock is scattered." It is stupid to not seek the Lord. You cannot grow without seeking the Lord. You will not be satisfied without seeking the Lord. And you will not be fruitful without seeking the Lord.

Seeking the Lord simply means to earnestly pursue Him in worship and prayer and devotion that we find Him. We experience His presence and nearness and intimacy. We listen to His voice. And in that intimate relationship we are changed, satisfied, and strengthened. 2 Cor 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The two reasons most don't develop this as a habit are: 1. They don't schedule it. 2. They don't have a plan. So, schedule it and come up with a plan—a worship plan and a prayer plan and a Bible reading plan. Make the choice to do it!

The late J. Oswald Sanders once said, "You will never be as close to the Lord as you wish to be, or even as close as you want to be; you will only be as close to the Lord as you choose to be." This is true of spiritual growth. You will not grow as much as you wish or want, but only as much as you choose. What will you choose? If you don't seek the Lord in 2018, the strength of habit is such that you probably never will. And if you don't, well, that is just stupid!

Pastor Gary

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2018

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**Every day Gary sends out a
daily verse and a personal
thought. To receive these
you can follow us on
Facebook or Twitter.**

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2018

