

## SPECIAL EMAIL UPDATE

From: Pastor Scott Distler

Date: 07/01/08



July 1, 2008

Dear Grace Church Family:

Our fiscal year for 2007/2008 came to a close on June 30 and a new fiscal year is now underway. What a great 12 months God gave to us as a ministry since July 1, 2007. This was a banner year for growth in both Sunday morning attendance and in our general fund giving. How thrilling it was to witness our June baptism and to hear the testimonies of so many who have recently found Christ through our ministry and to see so many kids trust Christ at our Bible School.

Last year our congregation approved a budget increase of **10%** over giving from the previous year. This was a step of faith but through your obedient stewardship, giving met and exceeded that goal for the fiscal year. Once again we have stepped up our ministry efforts and have increased this new fiscal year budget by **10%** over actual giving of last fiscal year. Please be praying about the steps of faith you will take as individuals and as a family to once again be used by God to meet this goal so that we can even more effectively meet people where they are and help move them to where God wants them to be.

This new fiscal year is already shaping up to be our biggest and best ministry year yet beginning with our July Patriotic Celebration this coming Sunday. But I want to take this opportunity to unveil to you our plans for the month of October 2008 which I believe will be the most important month in the recent history of our church. The big news for October is that we will use this month to start a third Sunday morning worship service.

We have been so blessed by God and it has been very exciting to see how God is growing Grace Church. Over the 2003-2004 fiscal year we averaged 711 on Sunday mornings. This average has risen each year to the most recent 2007-2008 fiscal year average of 1,252, which is a 76% increase or an average of nearly a 20% growth rate each year over the past four years. During the 2003-2004 fiscal year we only had 3 Sundays all year over 1,000 in attendance and there were no Sundays over 1,100 or higher. Compare that to the past 2007-2008 fiscal year where we were over 1,000 in attendance every Sunday of the year. On top of that, we were over 1,100 on 47 Sundays; over 1,200 on 32

Sundays; over 1,300 on 13 Sundays; over 1,400 on 5 Sundays; and we even topped 2,000 on Easter.

Now why do I share all of these statistics with you? The rule of thumb is that when a church is filling 80% of its seating capacity that its growth rate slows down. That means that to avoid losing momentum, a church needs to add an additional worship service prior to that 80% mark. We have a maximum seating capacity in our auditorium of 800. That means that over two worship services we can seat 1,600 people at most, 80% of that would be 1,280. As I noted above, we averaged 1,252 on Sunday mornings last fiscal year. That means that on the average we are filling 78% of our seating capacity. Now if you are a regular on Sundays here at Grace Church you realize that when you walk into the back of the auditorium at the start of either morning service it looks absolutely packed. If you add to this even the most conservative of numerical increases over the next fiscal year and we will be well over the 80% mark when it comes to auditorium seating capacity.

As a result, we believe that now is the time to act. So beginning in October, we will be adding a third Sunday morning worship service on a weekly basis. This will give us a total seating capacity of 2,400 and allow us plenty of room to continue to grow. You may be wondering why we are not adding this third service on Saturday evenings. The answer is that since our main reason behind an additional service is space, we felt that Sunday would be more profitable. We are not sure we could have gotten enough people to switch from Sunday morning to Saturday night to free up the space needed.

In order to facilitate this growth we will be shortening our Sunday morning worship services by 10 minutes. Currently our services are 75 minutes in length. Beginning in October they will be reduced to 65 minutes and the time in between services will also be shortened from 30 minutes to 25 minutes. Our service times will be 8:30; 10:00; and 11:30. The schedule for the morning would be as follows:

**8:30-9:35 First service**  
**9:35-10:00 Time between services**  
**10:00-11:05 Second service**  
**11:05-11:30 Time between services**  
**11:30-12:35 Third service**

All three services will be identical and will have a full nursery and children's program. In fact, our children's ministry will be offering our excellent "Elevate" children's program all three services and we also have plans to initiate an "Elevate Junior" program for our Early Childhood ministry. Due to the amount of time, energy and volunteers it is going to take to pull off an excellent children's program for three service each and every Sunday morning, we will no longer be offering a weekly Wednesday evening program for kids. It is just not possible for us to plan and staff all of these and we want to put our best effort into our Sunday morning ministry so that we can effectively meet children where they are and help move them to where God wants them to be. During the month of August we will be communicating all of the details to this step of growth as it relates to our Children's Ministry as well as our Youth Group and Adult Bible Fellowship Classes.

We will then use the month of September to communicate this news outside of our church along with many other exciting elements that are also planned for October.

During the month of October, we will be having a “**Ghost Busters**” theme on Sunday mornings as we take a look at the stories in the Bible where “ghosts” were thought to have been involved and we answer the haunting question, “Do ghosts really exist?” As part of this series we will be taking some video tours of local establishments that are said to be haunted including a pastoral report from one of the famous Gettysburg Ghost tours. Since October includes the Halloween holiday, which is usually passed over by the church in general, it is our hope that this Ghost Busters topic will create curiosity and provide you with a creative opportunity to invite your friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors to join us each Sunday for one of our three Sunday morning services.

It is our prayer to make the month of October the biggest month in the history of our church, a “Grand Reopening” of sorts. Along with starting a third morning worship service, this is also the month that we plan to launch our first wave of small groups. We also are looking to kick the month off with a big Youth Fifth Quarter to be held at the Lititz Rec Center following a Warwick High School football game and then bring the month to a close with a large Children’s Ministry Event as well. More information on all of these events will be coming in the near future.

We also want to use the month of October as a church to make a difference in the lives of hurting women and children in our community. Single parenthood and homelessness are two circumstances that are growing in our world at an alarming rate. Statistics tell us that families with children make up 40% of the homeless population. Of that number, up to 25% of the homeless population are women with children. Throughout October, we will be asking all of our ministries...adult, youth, children, school and daycare to join together to fill the needs of four local organizations that exist to help women and children who are going through struggling times. These organizations include Bridge of Hope, Clare House, Mom’s House, and the Lancaster County Children’s Shelter, all of which have made it their mission to serve these women and children in our community and to bring hope into an otherwise hopeless situation.

It is our desire to literally **STUFF THE SUNROOM** off of our church lobby with thousands of needed supplies and non-perishable foods. We will be distributing a list of supplies that are needed by these organizations. Every week through the month of October we are asking everyone who is part of our ministry to bring multiple items on this list with you to the church and help us **STUFF THE SUNROOM** in order to help meet the physical needs of hurting women and children right here in Lancaster County.

The more I think about October and the more our staff plans for this incredible month, the more excited I become. I am believing God to use this month to launch our church into a whole other level of ministry effectiveness, allowing us to meet more people than ever before or ever imagined so that He can use us to help move them to where He wants them to be. After all, Ephesians 3:20 teaches that we serve a God who is able to do super abundantly in quantity above anything we could ever ask or imagine. [So let’s imagine!](#)

If God is our partner, let's make our plans large! [And let's ask!](#) We know that nothing of eternal importance ever happens apart from prayer!

So what can you do as we prepare for October? Several things:

1. **Pray!** Pray for our staff as we plan! Pray for our church and pray that God would use our efforts to give us much fruit for His sake!
2. **Flex!** With a church our size it is impossible to make any decision, especially the big ones, and completely please everyone's thoughts, ideas and preferences. You can be sure that there will be some angle of this step that may not fit exactly what your thoughts would be. Please be flexible. Unity is essential for us to experience the blessing of God.
3. **Help!** Adding a third service means that we need to increase our volunteer base on Sundays by at least one-third. We now need to have children's workers, nursery workers, ushers, greeters, parking lot attendants, and techs to cover three full hours of ministry. If we could have everyone in our church attend one service and serve one service, we would easily be able to meet all of our volunteer needs. During the month of September we will be having tables set up where we need everyone to sign up for a place to work on Sunday Mornings.
4. **Invite!** We need you to tell everyone you know of our plans for October. If you know people that have teenagers, tell them about our Fifth Quarter. If you know people who have children, tell them about our Children's Event. Be sure to let everyone in your family, in your neighborhood, where you work, and everyone else know that beginning in October we will be offering three Sunday morning services. This should be easy. Ask these folks if they believe in ghosts, then no matter what their answer is, invite them to our "Ghost Busters" series to find out what the Bible says.
5. **Plan!** The 10:00 middle service will undoubtedly be the biggest of the three services and will likely also see the most guests in attendance. As a result we are asking you to prayerfully consider planning to attend either the 8:30 or 11:30 services as often as possible in order to free up seats at 10:00.
6. **Bring!** Every time you come to church during the month of October bring some supplies on our needs list so that we can stuff the sunroom and help to meet the physical needs of hurting women and children in our community through assisting local organizations!

As you can see, October is going to be huge! I can't wait! This is such a great ministry to be part of and there is no question in my mind that for Grace Church, the best is yet to come!

Believing God for Great Things!  
Pastor Scott

