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**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Thursday  
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

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YouTube: [YouTube.com/@grovesparkchurch](https://www.youtube.com/@grovesparkchurch)



**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

Sundays	5:00 p.m.	Family Hour (unless otherwise noted)
Mon., Wed., Thurs.	Noon	Devotional on Facebook Live
Tuesdays	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study on the Book of Acts 19 (Zoom). Begins January 9th.
Wednesdays	6:30 p.m. 7:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Facebook Prayer Meeting Zoom Prayer Meeting Choir Rehearsal
January 03	Noon	ROMEOS (Southbound Sandwich Works)
January 07	6:00 p.m.	Deacon Fellowship
January 08	7:00 p.m.	Finance Committee (Zoom)
January 09	7:00 p.m.	Bible Study begins via Zoom
January 11	1:00 p.m.	SIA Planning Committee



# The Messenger

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF GROVE PARK BAPTIST CHURCH | JANUARY 2024

The middle is something I have been giving a lot of thought to lately in part because it seems to be popping up all around me. I am solidly in the middle of my fifth decade, and hopefully that means I am at mid-life. I'm entering my 21st year of ministry which probably constitutes my being mid-career. Finally, we all find ourselves in the year of our Lord 2024, which places us in the middle of the decade. I suspect all of us find ourselves in the middle in some part of our life even when we fail to recognize our location, the question is what are we doing with the opportunity the middle offers?

It occurs to me as I have pondered "the middle" that one of the great gifts of this position is the knowledge that the end has not been written yet. Now, I know you are thinking oh yes it has, God knows it, and you and I would be in agreement. I would point out though we do not have the mind of God and so we remain in the dark concerning the future. We do not have to face it resignedly, but can make decisions now to change the story we have been living. We may not know what plot twists are upcoming, but we can say this is where I want to go and more importantly, where I think God desires for me to go and make the appropriate changes now, in the middle. Beloved, we should not rush to write the end of our story when we still have multiple chapters still to encounter. Our world is filled with too much resignation and despair, changes need to occur and our examination of the middle may be the catalyst needed to bring light and hope.

When I think of this more broadly, I see that Grove Park's story has not been completed yet either and we all have a role to play in writing the next chapters. So, as we enter the middle 20's, what do you want Grove Park to look like at the dawn of the 2030's? Have you taken the necessary step to inviting one of your Five, a person who could play a pivotal role in Grove Park's next chapter? Have you committed to being Kingdom driven by engaging our world through one of our four redemptive justice ministries? Are you asking God what are the words and sentences that will make the stories which compose our next chapters and imploring for grace to be able to discern them? Last month, with so many sermons and papers and articles to write all I wanted to do was never write again as the fatigue seemed insurmountable. You may have the same feelings concerning the chapters still to be written in your life and personal ministry. I can give witness to the fact that I made it through thanks to the power of prayer and God's abundant grace and you can too! So, pick up your pen and together let's start writing the next chapter.

Grace Abounds,  
Marc



*Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:19a)*

There are so many new things going on these days. My daughter and son-in-law are beginning a new life as a married couple; as I write this, I realize this is the first time I've written the phrase "my daughter and son-in-law" - so that's new. Kim and I are beginning a new life as empty nesters; it has been 30 years since it was just the two of us - so that's new. We all are on the brink of a new year, and while we don't know what it will bring, we know it will bring some things we've never experienced before.

As I've said before, I've never been a big fan of new. I like the predictable and don't like surprises. Some people complain that they're stuck in a rut; I like knowing where I am and where I'm going. For people like me, the unpredictable can be scary.

If there's one thing I've learned through my 50-some years in relationship with God, it is that He is unpredictable. While He has given us so many precious promises, and He always keeps His word, He often fulfills those promises in ways that we do not expect. One of my favorite verses, Ephesians 3:20, reminds us that God is *...able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think*. That's why His ways so often seem unpredictable to us - because His power and His understanding are so far beyond ours.

We may not be able to predict what will happen in 2024, or even to foretell what specific things God has in store for us during this year. But, there is one thing we can predict about God. As Jesus promised in the Great Commission, He is with us always - every day - no matter what comes. He will be with us every day of 2024 and every day beyond that, until the end of the age. And because He never changes (Malachi 3:6), we can count on His power, His understanding, His grace, and His love to surround us in 2024 - no matter what the year brings.

This year, let's be determined to "trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

Dale



**A New Year's Prayer**

May God make your year a happy one!  
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,  
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;  
Not by making your path easy,  
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;  
Not by taking hardships from you,  
But by taking fear from your heart;  
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,  
But by keeping your face bright,  
even in the shadows;  
Not by making your life always pleasant,  
But by showing you  
when people and their causes need you most,  
and by making you anxious to be there to help.  
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you  
for the year ahead.

~Anonymous

The Women's Shelter is in need of 2024 calendars for their clients. This enables them to keep up with appointments, etc. If you have any that you will not be using, please drop them by the church office or leave on the table in the vestibule.



**Hope Boxes:** We are so grateful for all the contributions we continue to receive for this outreach ministry. During the month of January, we are collecting coloring books and card games.



Items can be placed in the baskets located in the vestibule or dropped off at the church office.

**Food Pantry:** We continue to be blessed to be able to help people who contact the church office facing food insecurities.



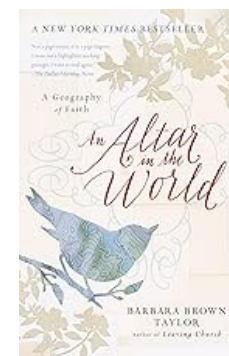
We are collecting the following during the month of January to replenish our stock: peanut butter, jelly, saltines, graham crackers, canned vegetables, and SpaghettiOs.



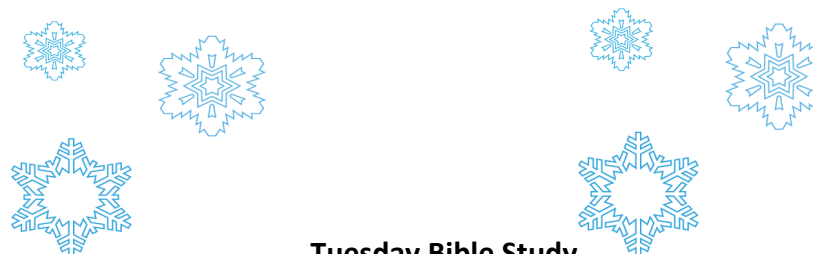
Donated items can be placed in the baskets in the vestibule or dropped off at the church office Mondays thru Thursdays.

**New Grove Park Book Club Discussion:**

The GPBC Book Club will begin its next book on Thursday, February 1st at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. We will be reading Barbara Brown Taylor's "An Altar in the World." Taylor explores finding God in the everyday situations of life and how we can increase our awareness of the divine all around us.



The book can be found on Amazon.



**Tuesday Bible Study**

Our Tuesday Bible Study resumes on Tuesday, January 9th in Acts 19. The Zoom link remains the same as the one used throughout the Fall.

If you need the link or would like to join the group, please message the church office and the link will be emailed to you.

(Our Known)  
**January Birthdays**

Cheryl Parrish	January 04
Janet Durham	January 06
Savannah Williamson	January 06
Lambert	January 06
Kim Wood	January 09
Linda Canada	January 13
Richard Shepherd	January 15
Debbie Hamlett	January 19
Irene Britton	January 20
Janice Byrd	January 21
John Evans	January 21
Matt Evans	January 21
Larry Dodson	January 22
Norene Ray	January 22
Mike Byrd	January 23
Rosemary Faircloth	January 25
Tricia Medford	January 25
Karen Banzhoff	January 27



**Ministers On Call for the Month of January:**

January 04 thru January 07	Deacon Matthew Byrd
January 11 thru January 14	Deacon Jason Bogart
January 18 thru January 21	Deacon Marian Brewer
January 25 thru January 28	Deacon Beth Canada