

Prayer of Thanksgiving: how thankful we can be that by the will of God we have been sanctified/set apart. **“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb 10:10 ESV)**

Please do not forget to pray for all the shut-ins and isolated brothers and sisters in our congregations Mrs. Jack and C. Campbell (Fredericton) and J. Steffes (Caribou, Me), Mr. Ross Bathurst, P. Ward (Saint John) and others.

Open Hand Food Bank – Moncton - is in need of grocery plastic bags to give out food to those in need. If you are interested in donating your unused grocery bags, you can bring them to church and someone will collect them and bring them over. Those who want to bring food to give to the **Open Food Bank** may do so by bringing to church and giving it to **Michael M.** of the Moncton congregation.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE MONTH OF December 2018

Times of worship services: **Moncton** – 10:30 AM every Sunday

In Saint John , services are cancelled on Sunday, December 23.

Communion- on the second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Address: Moncton—70 King St. —Sage building;

Saint John—50 Newport Cres., Portland United church.

Prayer Update and Request:

Prayer update from Mr. and Mrs. Ted and Donna Johnston (Dated Dec. 19, 2018) : They send their thanks for the prayers, cards and other expressions of support concerning their daughter Traci (Johnston) Calvert, who recently was diagnosed with cancer (<https://update.gci.org/2018/11/johnstons-daughter/> for the original prayer request).



Traci is doing well and returns home this week after undergoing the first round of chemotherapy at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. Subsequent rounds will be administered in Mobile, AL. While in Houston, Traci was cared for by her aunt Jan, Ted's sister (shown below with Traci), while Ted and Donna remained in Alabama to help care for Traci's two children and her husband Troy.

Your continued prayers for Traci are needed and much appreciated. Please pray that the cancer (which was successfully removed in surgery) will not return, and that Traci will be

blessed with long life in good health. (Cards can be sent to Traci and her family to Ted Johnston, 12289 Venice Blvd. Foley, AL 36535)

The good news of the gospel is a message to be shared with others. Please pray that God will give us the love and wisdom to be able to share this message with others in a loving, clear and confident matter as we participate in his missional work on the earth in our generation. **“5 ¶ Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. 6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Col 4:5-6 ESV)**

Please pray that God will put an end to the senseless violence happening in North America continent and other parts of the world.

Pray that we will see the good works that God has prepared for us in advance so that we can enthusiastically participate in the on-going work He is doing now on this earth in bringing people in relationship with him in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

Please pray, as per Jesus instructions, the disciples prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9-10) as our world is suffering so

much and in need of complete restoration by the King of kings, Jesus. As we are his royal priesthood, let us proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, as we are instructed in 1 Peter 2.

Pray for the world and for all people: we live in a world that does not know the way to peace. Important to pray as we are instructed by the apostle Paul — **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,” (1Ti 2:1–3 ESV)**

December 19, 2018 From the President - Grace Communion International

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Joseph and Tammy
Tkach



I write this letter mindful that it's likely my last contribution to *Update* as a GCI employee (I retire in January). As noted in an [earlier issue](#), I passed the GCI president baton to Dr. Greg Williams in October.

As I reflect on my years as President of our denomination, many blessings from God stand out in my memory. One has to do with our name—*Grace Communion International*. I think it beautifully describes our transformation as a fellowship. By the grace of God, we have become an *international, grace-based* denomination that shares in the *communion* of the Father, Son and Spirit. I have never doubted that our Triune God led us into and through the miraculous transformation that got us to this place of great blessing. My dear GCI brothers and sisters, thank

you for your faithfulness in that journey. Your lives are living evidence of our transformation.



Another blessing that comes to mind is one that many of our long-time members will relate to. Over the years, we often prayed in our church services that God would reveal to us more of his truth. Well, God answered that prayer—and in dramatic fashion! He opened the eyes of our hearts and minds to understand the great depth of his love for humanity, and showed us how he is always with us and for us and,

by grace, has our eternal future safe and secure.

Many of you have told me that, over the years, you heard no sermons in our fellowship on the topic of grace. I praise God that, beginning in the mid-1990s, we began to overcome that deficit. Sadly, some reacted negatively to our new emphasis on God's grace, asking questions like, "What is all this Jesus stuff?" Our answer then (as now) was this: "We preach the good news about the one who created us, who came for us, who died for us and who saved us!"



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from [Transforming Center](#))

During this Advent season, I'm focused on the wonder and glory of Jesus' comings for our salvation: through his incarnation and birth, now by the Spirit, and in his yet-future return. It's amazing that some who expectantly look for Jesus' return in glory (often called the "second coming") refuse to celebrate his first coming, his birth. Apparently they don't realize that there would be no second coming without the first. Have they not noticed that Luke devotes an entire chapter in his Gospel to Jesus' birth, and that the Bible nowhere devotes a whole chapter to the timing of

Jesus' return?

Following the Bible's emphasis on the key events in the life of Jesus, in GCI we celebrate or commemorate our Lord's incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Though we can't celebrate his return in the same way (it has not yet happened), we do, during Advent, celebrate the *promise* of his return, knowing that Jesus *always* fulfills what he has promised.

As Scripture tells us, our ascended Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven serving as our High Priest, awaiting his return in glory. As promised, he is preparing "a place" for us ([John 14:1-4](#)). That place is the gift of eternal life with God, a gift made possible by all that Jesus has and will yet accomplish. Concerning the revealing, through the Spirit, of the nature of that gift, the apostle Paul, quoting Isaiah, wrote this:

We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ([1 Cor. 2:7-10, ESV](#))

I thank God for revealing to us the mystery of our salvation in Jesus—a salvation secured through our Lord’s incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and promised return. All of this is of grace—the grace of God given us in and through Jesus, by the Spirit.

Though I will soon retire from GCI employment, I will remain involved with our fellowship. I will continue serving on GCI boards in the US and UK, and on the Grace Communion Seminary board. I may also teach a course or two at GCS and do some preaching in my home congregation. My pastor Bermie Dizon has wondered aloud if I’d give monthly sermons. I joked with him that all this work doesn’t sound like retirement—it’s more like being *retreaded* for more miles! As we know, ministry is not a job—it’s a calling, a way of life. As long as God gives me strength, I’ll never stop ministering to others on our Lord’s behalf.

As I look back at the past several decades, in addition to wonderful memories related to GCI, I have many that are related to my family. Tammy and I have been blessed to see our two children grow up, graduate from college, find good jobs and become happily married. Our celebration of these milestones is heightened because we did not expect to reach them. As many of you know, our church formerly taught that there would be no time for such things—Jesus was returning soon, and we’d be taken to a “place of safety” in the Middle East prior to the second coming. Thankfully, God had other plans, though he does have a place of safety prepared for us all—it’s his eternal kingdom.

When I began serving as President of our denomination back in 1995, my focus was on pointing people to the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Even though I’m now retiring after over 23 years as GCI President, it is still my focus and will continue to be. By God’s grace, I will not stop pointing people to Jesus! He lives, and because he lives, we do too.

Advent and Christmas blessings from my family to yours,
– Joseph Tkach, Chairman, GCI Board of Directors

PS: With this issue we say goodbye to Ted Johnston, *Update* editor-publisher for the past ten years. Beginning with the next issue (January 9), the new editor-publisher will be Charlotte Rakestraw, member of our Media team. I’m grateful to all the men and women who have contributed so skillfully and faithfully to producing *Update* over the years, including Ted, Deb Paz, John Halford, Michael Morrison, Gary Deddo, Rick Shallenberger, Nancy Akers, Terry Akers, Janet Shay and many others. It’s been a labor of love.

Though Ted retires from GCI in January, he will continue teaching at Grace Communion Seminary and producing [The Surprising God](#), a blog I highly recommend for its easily-digestible articles written from an incarnational Trinitarian perspective. Often quoting the Torrances and other Trinitarian theologians, the topics addressed on the blog include the Trinity, grace, our worship, final judgment, works, election, freedom, universalism and hell.

A message for Boomers

As the Boomer generation reaches the age of retirement, they are challenged to focus on mentoring the younger generations for leadership within the church. For ideas about how to do that, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2018/july/boomers-lets-be-elders-church-needs.html?paging=off> to read a helpful *Christianity Today* article written by Karl Vaters.



GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton; For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. *Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—evautour47@outlook.com*