

GraceNotes

A Monthly Newsletter of Grace Christian Church

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GROWING IN GRACE “BEING THE CHURCH” (or “Refugees of Jesus”)

It was a wonderful Easter Season last month at Grace Christian Church. There was truly a ‘God-sent’ Spirit in all of our worship, prayer, praise, and fellowship. Special services, special music, words of inspiration, and lots of participation filled our gatherings. What a joy! There truly is no substitute for a Christian family with whom to share life as an expression of faith in Jesus. It’s very New Testament, very Book of Acts, very first century, and very much the way “CHURCH” is intended to be. The times change, but the church as a visible, audible, and experiential glimpse of the Kingdom must never change.

The church is relevant to every time, age, and generation. It bears witness to the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ that is unchanging. That does not mandate uniformity of means, modes, and methods. It does, however, require unity of commitment to faithfully “BEING THE CHURCH.” But what does “being the church” really mean? That question has been asked and answered over and over throughout Church history. Is there a definitive answer that carries the day? To be sure, many eloquent and Biblically accurate ones have been submitted but here’s another for consideration: How about, “The Church is the community of those who have taken refuge in Jesus as Lord and Savior.” Paul intimated toward such a definition when he said, “You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). The word “hidden” is translated from the Greek word that means “covered” or “concealed.” It is suggestive of security, safe-haven, and protection – ie., refuge.

‘Refugee status’ is a common descriptor for millions of people, past, and present who have fled from _____ to _____. What goes in the first blank could be any one of hundreds of crises. In like sign, what goes in the second blank could be any one of hundreds of ‘hiding places.’ So how does that translate for Christians? What are they fleeing from? What are they fleeing to? For starters, they are fleeing from fallenness, sin, Satan, death, and a world that is perishing. They are fleeing to Jesus who is refuge – the only refuge – from all of those. And all who come to Jesus as a refugee will, paradoxically, find freedom to live in the world but not of the world. They will find life as an experience, not of hiding from the world, but of hiding in Jesus.

Those whose lives are “hidden with Christ” find boldness to be a refugee who is able to live “in publica oculus” – that is, in the public eye. They are empowered to live as ‘refugees’ without

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