

GRACEVIEWS

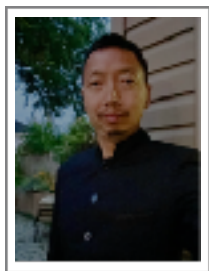
**September/October
2026**

Our mission is to worship God, to spread His word, and to serve communities near and far.



**Graceview Presbyterian Church
588 Renforth Drive, Etobicoke ON M9C 2N5**

Minister's Message...Do We Still Know Our Bibles?



It may seem like an odd question to ask in church. After all, the Bible is at the heart of our worship. We hear Scripture read, listen to sermons, sing hymns drawn from its words, and pray using language shaped by it. Many of us have been reading the Bible for years, even decades. And yet, perhaps the question is worth asking.

I recently came across a thoughtful article in *Christianity Today* about the decline of biblical literacy in the church. One sentence especially caught my attention: **“The church is, and has always been, a house of learning.”** That is an important reminder. The church is not only a place where we worship, serve, and fellowship. It is also a community where we learn—to know God's Word, to understand our faith, to ask questions, and to grow in wisdom as followers of Jesus Christ.

Knowing the Bible is about more than remembering familiar stories or favourite verses. We can know the story of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, or Daniel, and yet miss the larger story in which they belong. We can know individual passages without seeing how the different parts of Scripture fit together.

Why does the Bible begin with creation? What happened to God's people throughout the Old Testament? How do the promises of the prophets point toward Christ? Why did Jesus come? How does the story of the early church lead toward the hope presented in Revelation?

When we begin to see these connections, we discover something remarkable: the Bible is not simply a collection of separate stories and teachings. It tells one great story of

God's creation, humanity's fall, God's covenant faithfulness, His promise of redemption, and His salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ.

This is why biblical learning matters. It is not about becoming experts who can answer every Bible question. It is about becoming people whose minds and lives are increasingly shaped by God's Word. As Paul reminds us, we are to be “*transformed by the renewing*” of our minds (*Romans 12:2*).

It is also part of how we pass our faith from one generation to another. *Psalms 145:4* says, “*One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.*” We have received something precious from those who came before us, and we have the privilege and responsibility of knowing it well enough to share it with those who come after us.

This fall, we will have an opportunity to do some of that learning together. In collaboration with the Canadian Bible Society, Jacob Birch will lead an eight-week Bible study beginning **Tuesday, September 15 at 12:15 p.m.** He will give us an overview of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

I hope it will be a helpful opportunity—not something we feel we *ought* to attend, but something we might genuinely enjoy doing together. There is something wonderful about opening the Scriptures with other people, discovering connections we may have missed before, and sometimes simply being reminded of truths we have known for years but need to hear again.

A healthy church is not a church that thinks it already knows everything. It is a church that remains humble enough to keep learning, curious enough to keep asking questions, and faithful enough to keep returning to God's Word.

So, do we still know our Bibles? Perhaps the better question is whether we are still **learning** our Bibles. And as we learn them more deeply, may we come to know God more deeply, follow Christ more faithfully, and become better equipped to live and share the faith we have received.

May Graceview continue to be a church that worships, serves, cares for one another—and remains a people of the Book, always ready to listen and learn from the Word of God.

Walking with you in faith, Pastor Eric

Some shout-outs...

*We have been in summer mode since early June, with committee activities and choir paused, reduced attendance, people at cottages or just relaxing with family, and an informal approach to our worship services. Nevertheless, there are some things that continue to happen throughout the summer, and they don't happen by accident or magic. **A big thank you to:***

Susan, for keeping the Weekly News going all summer, taking only one week off for a holiday.

Al, Earl and Dave for keeping the grass cut and the bushes trimmed.

The AV team (Jackie, Norma, Halyna, Iris and Bob) for their faithfulness in providing live streaming for our people who rely on it.

Bob, who has spent many hours this summer at the church and at home dealing with the AV equipment, sorting out glitches, meeting with our tech experts, researching what we need to do to upgrade our system, and sending and receiving countless emails related to all of this.

Our readers, announcers and prayer people for faithfully continuing to show up on their appointed days.

Carol and Earl for looking after lemonade and cookies after church, and all those who generously contributed cash or cookies for this purpose.

Al and Lynne, Harry and Pat, Pastor Eric, Helen N. and others who continue to minister to Centennial Park Place on summer Thursdays.

“The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul.” Johann Sebastian Bach

The Church as Concert Hall

Kathy Twynam

We have been very blessed over the summer to have our erstwhile Music Director and friend, Kento Stratford, playing for us, while we consider the direction we wish to take with our music program in the future. We continue to be blown away by his outstanding skill on the piano and organ, his ability to take a simple hymn tune and improvise, playing different variations in different keys, seemingly out of his head, often as the prelude or postlude to our services. Kento tells us that he didn't start playing piano until he was fifteen years old, which I think is quite astonishing given the consummate musicianship he has developed before the age of thirty.

Where does such talent come from? I truly believe that in cases of inexplicably early musical prowess, one is born with it. Mozart, trained by his father Leopold, at the age of five was already competent on keyboard and violin, had begun to compose, and had performed before European royalty.

I know how difficult it is to learn to play piano when you are not “born with it.” I had music lessons for a few years as a child, until at the age of eleven I messed up a recital and was so devastated that I refused to continue. My parents caved in and let me quit, for which I have never forgiven them. Later, when our boys were teenagers, I tried again with a local music teacher and got to about the Grade Seven conservatory level before I finally accepted that I had more than reached my level of incompetence, and decided to waste my money no longer.

During these summer months when the choir is taking a break, in place of the usual choir anthem, Kento has been playing a “reflective instrumental”, perhaps a variation on

one of our hymns or a short piece of classical music suitable for a church service. In years gone by, when our Music Director of almost fifty years, Eric Medhurst, was with us, he would often treat us to a piano solo during the offertory, in the pre-covid days when we actually passed the collection plate. Occasionally, the piece he chose would run longer than the taking up of the collection, a practice that was sometimes met with objection from a few who felt that a church service was not an appropriate venue for a classical piano solo. At one point someone was heard to say that “the church is not a concert hall!”

Well, I beg to differ - the church is indeed a concert hall. In fact, it was the first concert hall, often the first venue for the great European composers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries to showcase their music.

In the early 18th century in the cathedrals, monasteries, and larger town churches of the Baroque era, the general assumption was that the organists or choirmasters would compose their own music, as well as play and conduct. Organists had to improvise or write out music to accompany solemn places during the service and play long pieces to see the congregation out at the end of the service. Many of our most beloved European composers were, in their early years, church organists, playing and composing for their own congregations before bringing their music to the larger stages of the courts and the opera houses.

The great English composer of the Baroque era, Henry Purcell, was the organist at Westminster Abbey, writing much sacred music for performance there, as well as a great deal of music for the London theatre. (I have a special place in my heart for him. When Bob and I were married, my Dad and I walked up the aisle to Purcell’s “Trumpet Tune”, superbly played by my great aunt Margie, who was a well-known concert pianist in Nova Scotia).

Johann Sebastian Bach, ten years old when Purcell died in 1695, was at the age of eighteen invited to inspect and give the inaugural recital on the new organ at St. Boniface Church in Arnstadt, Germany, and shortly thereafter accepted the position of organist at that church. Four years later he moved on to the post of organist at St. Blasius Church in Muhlhausen, where he persuaded the church council to undertake an expensive renovation of the organ and in return wrote and performed an elaborate cantata for the inauguration of the new church council. He was twenty-two years old at the time.

Joseph Haydn was a protégé of Georg von Reutter, director of music at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, one of the leading music centres in Europe.

George Friederic Handel, while studying law at the University of Halle to please his father, played the organ at the local Protestant cathedral.

A hundred years later, Antonin Dvorak, renowned Czech composer who spent some years as director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York City (from where he wrote his well-known symphony "From the New World") was a church organist in his earlier years. Most of us would recognize the largo from the New World symphony as the beautiful piece "Goin' Home."

Stupendous music has resonated from the cathedrals and basilicas of Europe for hundreds of years and continues to do so in the twenty-first century.

A number of years ago Bob and I spent three weeks in Eastern Europe, visiting Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Split, Zagreb, Dubrovnik, and smaller places in between. Prague, Vienna, Budapest and Zagreb are not at all shy about celebrating their vast and splendid music heritages. Night after night, many of the great cathedrals, churches and

palaces in these cities were packed with people listening to orchestras and singers performing the music of Bach, Mozart, Strauss, Dvorak, Liszt, and others. It is a huge attraction for tourists, not to mention a money-maker for the cities.

We had the privilege of attending such a concert in Vienna, and it was very much a highlight of our trip. All over that city there were people in eighteenth century costume, complete with knee-breeches, frilly shirts, buckled shoes and wigs, promoting these concerts, handing out flyers and selling tickets. We were with our over-large group of forty-six people one morning, listening to a dreadfully boring tour guide who looked like he would rather be anywhere else, as he led us on a walking tour. We kept passing sandwich-board signs advertising concerts, and people in costume handing out fliers, and we said to each other, "That would be fun! Let's get tickets." Others in our group overheard us, and they wanted to come too. In the end, ten of us got tickets to a Mozart/Strauss concert that night.

This one was not in a cathedral, but at the Imperial Palace, the Hofburg, official residence of the President of Austria. The building has housed, in the past, some of the most powerful people in Austrian history, including members of the Hapsburg dynasty. The opulent room was enormous and every seat was taken. The fabulous Wiener Hofburg Orchestra played Mozart and Strauss like I have never heard before. They were accompanied by five soloists – two sopranos, a contralto, a tenor, and a bass - who sang operatic arias from such works as Don Giovanni, The Marriage of Figaro, Die Fledermaus, and others. The final two pieces on the program were Strauss' Blue Danube Waltz and Radetsky March. What's not to love about that? One of our friends, who claimed to know nothing about classical music and didn't think he would like it, but who came to humour his wife, marvelled at the fact that he recognized almost every piece, and thoroughly enjoyed it. Some of the

world's best known and loved melodies, including a number of our hymn tunes, come from operas.

While we were being thus entertained in Vienna, there were concerts happening in St. George's Basilica and the Church of St. Francis in Prague. Budapest was showcasing the music of Mozart in St. Stephen's Basilica, Liszt and Vivaldi in St Michael's Church, and a variety of composers in Matthias Church. In Zagreb, there were concerts at St. Mark's and St. Catherine's. And I have no doubt that similar events were taking place all over Europe.

If all music has as its final end the glory of God and the refreshment of the soul, as Bach thought, then we should have no qualms about relaxing, for a few minutes in the middle of a worship service, and offering to God, along with our financial contribution, the beautiful music that is being so superbly played for us, and thanking Him humbly that we have someone among us who can give us this gift.

Save the date!

Graceview's Outreach Team Presents

A Taste of Italy

Friday, October 16 (to be confirmed after Labour Day)

Tickets: \$30

**Prepared by the teacher and students of Thistlethorn Collegiate's
culinary arts program, assisted by Chef Keith Hoare.**

**All proceeds from the dinner will go to the
Thistlethorn Euro Trip to Italy which will take place during the 2027
March Break.**

A few weeks ago as we were having dinner with friends, the conversation turned to questions of Christianity, and what it means to be a Christian. Funny how dinner conversations sometimes take on a life of their own. We did not get together for dinner planning to discuss the Bible, of all things, – it just happened. This conversation arose from a discussion of one of the most difficult passages in the Bible, the story of Abraham and Isaac. We had recently heard the story in church and all of us were considerably bothered by it. Eric had preached about it - how Abraham was about to murder his thirteen-year-old son Isaac at what he believed to be the command of God, when, just before the knife was to fall, God intervened, put a stop to it, and provided an alternate sacrifice in the form of a lamb.

I was glad I was not the reader when that passage was read, because I cannot comfortably read it without feeling outraged that God could require such a sacrifice of anyone. Which of us could sacrifice one of our children because we believed that's what God wanted? I would venture to say, not one, good Christians that we are. Abraham clearly believed it. He did not know or expect that God would relent in the nick of time and save him from the heinous act he was about to commit. I understand the point – Abraham's trust in God was being tested. If I were in Abraham's sandals, I know that my trust in God would fail the test miserably because I could not do what was asked of me. I wonder how long it took young Isaac to get over the trauma of knowing that his father, who was supposed to love and protect him, was quite prepared to kill him and almost did.

As our dinner conversation progressed, the question came up - if we could not obey God in this situation, can we still call ourselves Christians? The writing of the Hebrew Bible, i.e. the Old Testament, spans more than two thousand years, with the most recent documents being as late as 400-500

BCE or even later, but still centuries before the New Testament was compiled. Does being a Christian depend on our total acceptance of every word, law, or story contained in this collection of ancient documents, even though Christian authorities in the fourth century included it as part of the biblical canon - the “inspired word of God.”? Jesus certainly didn’t think so, as evidenced by his frequent and public disregard of Mosaic Law, laws many of which, if followed today, would land a person in jail pretty quick.

I spent several hours one afternoon researching this very topic and reading what Christian academics and theologians have to say, and virtually all the comments I read expressed some variation of the following:

*The New Testament teaches that **Christians are no longer under the jurisdiction of the specific and outdated ceremonial and ritual laws from the Old Testament.** Instead, Christians are called to follow the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ, which focuses on love of God and love of neighbour as the highest commandments.*

*Christians understand that the coming of Christ fulfilled the Old Law, and introduced a new era of grace and faith, where salvation is not achieved by strictly adhering to the ceremonial and dietary laws of the Old Testament, but through faith in Jesus Christ. **The moral law (e.g., the Ten Commandments) remains, but the ceremonial and civil laws specific to the ancient Israelites do not apply to Christians.***

So, fellow Christians, we need not question our Christianity if there are parts of the Old Testament that we do not like or do not agree with. We are New Testament people, governed by the new covenant established by Jesus. The question to ask ourselves is this: do we believe in and follow the teachings of Jesus? Are we passionate about the things Jesus was passionate about, such as social justice and the equality of women, and do we work to try to achieve them in our modern society where the evils of the world often overshadow them?

Jesus talked often about the “kingdom of heaven.” This phrase appears seventy-six times in the gospel of Matthew. Mark, Luke and John use the phrase “kingdom of God”.

Jesus said the kingdom is "in your midst" (Luke 17:21) operating in the hearts of believers. I believe that Jesus came to change the world, that he foresaw a "kingdom" here on earth, where justice and peace prevail, where everyone shares in God's abundance, where everyone has enough, and no one is left behind. Sadly, it is a vision that is yet to be fulfilled.

So, what does it mean to you to be a Christian?

I have heard people speak of "coming to Christ" or "finding Jesus", implying that there was a specific moment or episode in their lives when they accepted Jesus as their Lord. This may be true for them, but that concept is totally foreign to me. I was born Christian just as I was born Canadian. I was baptized at ten days old and raised from infancy in a devout Christian household. When I was twelve I was confirmed in faith through the Sacrament of Confirmation. Thoroughly educated in Christian schools through high school, it never occurred to be that I could be anything else. I would no more give it up than I would give up my citizenship. Both are valuable privileges to be cherished.

Christianity comes in many forms and many traditions, with only minor variations in doctrine. I consider all of them to be valid. Back in the early 70's, when Bob and I were looking for a church where we could both feel at home and where we could raise our future children, I didn't care what denomination we eventually ended up embracing. We visited several churches of different denominations before settling on Hillview as our church home. Differences in doctrine and tradition among Christian churches did not matter to me. What mattered was the attitude of the people – were they friendly and welcoming? Did the atmosphere feel like a family? Did the minister's message inspire me? Was the music joyful and uplifting? Hillview, and later Graceview, ticked all the boxes. When we started going to Hillview in 1973, I didn't have a clue about the Presbyterian

Church. Any preconceived notions I had were there only because I had read Lucy Maud Montgomery's novels, where Presbyterianism was heavily featured. But my dear friend Roberta Sutherland, wife of Hillview's long-time Clerk of Session, took me under her wing and showed me the ropes, and I quickly came to feel like I belonged.

To me, Christianity means the comfort of gathering every week with like-minded people to learn about and try to follow as best I can, the teachings of Jesus. It means commemorating the major events of Jesus' life through the rituals we follow at Christmas and Easter. It means celebrating the legacy of communion that he left us at the last supper. It means doing what we can to make the world a little better for as many people as possible. It means sharing our unique talents for the benefit of our congregation and the community around us. It means something as simple as being a good friend to someone who needs a friend. It means a profound feeling of unity with the 2.5 billion other Christians in the world. 31% of the world's entire population is Christian, making Christianity the world's largest religion.

Much as we might despair about the state of the world and the human condition, much as we might pray about the "turbid ebb and flow of human misery" that we see around us in the form of fires, floods, earthquakes, drought, tornadoes, famine, homelessness, and endless senseless wars, Christianity gives us a glimmer of hope that mankind will prevail and that the kingdom of heaven on earth will one day be a reality.

My sister-in-law Karen, a confirmed non-believer who is well-read and likes to talk about such things as philosophy and religion, didn't hesitate during one such conversation when I asked her to tell me one word that comes to mind in relation to Christianity. She simply said "Love." That in a nutshell is what Christianity means to me. Anything else is secondary. As Jesus meant it to be.

While many of you were relaxing at cottages this summer or doing a bit of travelling, Bob and I also did some travelling - to St. Jacob's, Cambridge, or Drayton Ontario, to attend theatrical shows. Some of you know that we are big fans of Drayton summer repertory theatre and go to several shows every year. If you like live theatre, there is no better deal in or near the GTA. Tickets for the best seats in the house are in the neighbourhood of \$50 -\$60, compared to the \$180 per ticket we paid to see Something Rotten at Stratford. Over the years we have seen a lot of theatre, in many different venues – Stratford, Shaw, London, Broadway, Sydney Australia, to name a few - and the calibre of the shows produced by Drayton Entertainment could stand up to anything.

Tickets are usually available for the next season early in December. We check out the playbill, decide on the shows we would like to see, check with our kids to see if they are interested in any of them, and order all the tickets at once, spread out over the summer. We prefer to go to a weekday matinee, at one of the six local theatres at which these performances are featured. We take a picnic lunch and try to arrive about an hour before the show, as some of the parking lots are quite small. We get parked, have our lunch, see the show, and then go somewhere for dinner. It's one of my favourite ways to spend a day. It's a "date day" for us.

The first show on the agenda this year was **42nd Street**, early in July, that I attended with our daughter-in-law Christine. Bob and I had seen it a few years ago at Stratford, and the Drayton production was staged a little differently but was every bit as professional and entertaining.

Later that month Bob and I and our son John went to see **Sister Act** at the Drayton Festival Theatre in, you guessed it, Drayton. It wasn't one I would have chosen, but John had seen the movie and thought it would be good. Well, it was

more than good, it was fabulous, filled with glorious gospel-inspired music, wonderful dancing, and an uplifting story that sent us home happy.

If you're an Elvis fan, you would have loved the Drayton production, **Return to Grace**. I am not a particular fan of Elvis, but the star of the show ("Elvis") was excellent and I enjoyed it anyway.

Late in August we headed to the Hamilton Family Theatre in Cambridge to see **Nashville Music City**. What a great show that was! Ten performers on stage belting out with joyful exuberance or poignant reflection, songs made famous by singers who got their start in Nashville in the early years of country rock music. People like Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, George Jones, Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton...the list goes on. We loved it!

We have one more to see in 2026, in December – **All is Calm**, the story of the Christmas Truce.

The audience for these shows, as is usually the case, is mostly made up of people old enough to remember things like Elvis' first performance on the Ed Sullivan show in 1956, where he was only shown above the waist because his hip gyrations were considered too suggestive for family viewing. I was there, in front of our old, snowy, black-and-white TV. I was ten years old.

I am constantly blown away by the talent we have, right here in southern Ontario. I like to read the bios of the cast members and creative teams and am gratified to see that most are Canadian and many are graduates of Toronto's Sheridan College Music Theatre program. I think it's amazing – they can sing, they can dance, they can often play multiple musical instruments, they can memorize hundreds of lines of script in a very short time - and deliver it all to their audiences with impeccable timing and consummate professionalism.

I was surprised to learn that professional main-stage shows at Drayton Entertainment typically rehearse for only **about 2 to 3 weeks** full-time (six days a week, roughly 8 hours a day) before opening, which is standard for regional theatre and professional companies working under Canadian Actors' Equity Association guidelines.

If any of this interests you, just google Drayton Entertainment for the 2027 Playbill. Next year's line-up will feature shows like **Billy Elliot** (we saw it in London a while back and loved it), **Come from Away**, **Jimmy Buffet's Escape to Margaritaville**, **Ghost: The Musical**, **School of Rock**, **Country Legends: Home for the Holidays**, and several non-musical dramas including **To Kill a Mockingbird**. I know what we will be doing next summer.

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The Seven Teachings and Their Animals

The seven grandfather teachings are a set of Anishinaabe guiding principles that show how to live a good life in peace and respect with all creation.

Wisdom (Nibwaakaawin): Represented by the **beaver**, meaning to cherish knowledge and use your gifts to help your family and community.

Love (Zaagidwin): Represented by the **eagle**, meaning to know peace and love all things unconditionally.

Respect (Mnaadendimowin): Represented by the **buffalo**, meaning to honor all of creation and go easy on one another.

Bravery (Aakwa'ode'ewin): Represented by the **bear**, meaning to face challenges and problems with integrity.

Honesty (Gwekwaadziwin): Represented by the **sabe** (bigfoot) or raven, meaning to be true in word and action and honest with yourself.

Humility (Dbaadendiziwin): Represented by the **wolf**, meaning to know yourself as a sacred part of creation and live for your pack.

Truth (Debwewin): Represented by the **turtle**, meaning to know all the teachings and speak only what you have experienced.

On Sunday, July 19, we welcomed Pastor Won Hwang to our pulpit, not for the first time. Ordained in 2006 by the Presbyterian Church in Korea, he has recently been admitted to serve in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. While providing pulpit supply, he is prayerfully seeking a pastoral call to continue his ministry of teaching and shepherding God's people.

I know that Won's spoken English is not perfect and can be difficult to understand, especially for a senior population such as ours where some of us (including myself) are hearing impaired. He is well aware of this, and in the three or four sermons we have heard he has wisely taken steps to help us out by providing visual aids and engaging the congregation in the reading of the pertinent biblical passages. One must pay close attention to understand and process his message.



I am printing Won's sermon of July 19 because I did make an effort to listen and understand it and it made quite an impression on me. I thought it was thought-provoking and biblically based. Won clearly knows how to put a sermon together. He starts with a hook meant to engage, in this case a series of interesting questions. He enumerates his points, provides a real-life example, and wraps it up appropriately. I think it's quite remarkable that a relative newcomer to Canada, whose first language is so different from ours and is not based on the English language alphabet, is able to do this. The sermon is unnecessarily wordy and I considered abridging it, but I decided it would be presumptuous of me to alter the original script. I did miss some words and I'm sure many of you did too, but I think it is worth reading.

We are Created in the Image of God Pastor Won Hwang

What do you think is the biggest problem we face today? Do you think we cannot solve the biggest problem? When you encounter the biggest problem, have you thought about yourself and your abilities? In face of the biggest problem, what do you think about yourself and your abilities? Today's scripture proclaims that we are created in the image of God and the likeness of God. What does this proclamation tell us

about the biggest problem we face? What does this proclamation tell us about who God is, who are we, what can we do, and what is the aim of Jesus' ministries? First, who is God? To find the answer to this question, let us think about before creation and after creation. As Genesis 1:2 states: *"the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters"*. Before the creation of the heavens and earth, the earth was formless and did not have anything. The earth was covered with darkness and deep water. In other words, there was no condition for any living things to exist, and there were no living things. In this situation, first God created the condition for all living things, by separating light from darkness and day from night and by dividing dry land from sea. After creating the condition, God created all living things. As a result, water, sky, and the earth are teeming with all kinds of living things. So we can see that the condition for living things to live and all living things are created by God's creating power. This means that the life of all living things begins because God gives it. The life of all living things can continue because God created their living condition.

After God created the condition and all living things, God blesses them to be fruitful and multiply and fill water, sky, and the earth. This implies that God empowers all living things with the capacity to live and grow. At the same time, God provides all living things with plants and fruits as their food. Here when we consider that God provides all living things with the ability to live and grow and God provides them with food, we can see the intention of God creating the condition and all living things. The intention of God is that all living things flourish with the ability and food God gives them. Also when we consider the intention of God, we can know that God guides us to know what we should do and what we should not do with what God has done and what God will do. So Genesis 1 tells us that God is the Creator of the condition and all living things, Provider of the ability to

live and grow and food, the One who intends to flourish, and Guide of us to know what we (should) not do. In other words, all living things absolutely depend on God for the beginning of their life, the continuing of their life, and the guidance of their life.

So God is like a singer, and all living things are a song. If the singer stops singing a song, the song does not sit there. The song ceases to exist.

Second, who are we? We can find the answer to this question in Genesis 1:26-27 *Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness ... So God created humankind in his image; In the image of God he created them; Male and female he created them."*

Let us think about verse 26. According to verse 26, God creates humankind in God's likeness and image. What do God's likeness and image tell us about who we are? First, let us think about likeness. The Hebrew word *likeness* (can be translated as) *shadow*. My shadow is like me. If I raise my arm, my shadow raises its arm. We are God's likeness, saying that we are a shadow of God. What we say and what we do are like what God says and what God does. As God creates the condition for all living things to live and all living things, we, God's shadow, can participate in God's creating power by copying what God does and what God says. As God provides all living things with the ability to live and grow, we, God's shadow, can support others to find their ability and develop it for their living and growth. As God provides all living things with plants and fruits as their food, we, God's shadow, can provide the needy, the hungry, the homeless, Palestine survivors and bereaved families by sharing what we have. As God intends all living things to flourish, we, God's shadow, do not participate in diminishing and destroying all living things' life but help them to thrive in their life.

Now let us think about image. God's image is not the idol or statue of god. God's idol or statue is thought of as a picture or sculpture of the god or as being of the god. However, God's image is the place where people can encounter and truly worship God. The Hebrew word for image is translated to the Greek word *icon*. You can see icons on your cell phone or computer. When you click an icon on your cellphone or computer, it is not for you to admire it. Instead, when you click an icon on your device, it is for you to have access to it. For example, when you click on the YouTube icon, it is for you to have access to YouTube videos and channels. When Genesis 1 says that each of us is the image of God, it is saying that everyone here is understood as the place where God can be encountered and truly worshipped. In other words, if anyone wants to encounter and worship the Creator creating the condition and all the living things, God providing the ability to live and grow and food, God intending all living things to thrive, God guiding us to know, the only way to encounter and worship God is in each of us. For this reason, in the Ten Commandments God commands not to make an image of God because God has already made the image of God. It is everyone sitting here and everyone sitting next to us.

Now let us think about verse 27. Verse 27 gives us an example of one characteristic of Hebrew. Hebrew is characterized by parallelism. Parallelism is basically saying the same thing again and again, by replacing some of the words. In verse 27, we have three lines. The first line and the second line are parallel because they are saying the same thing by just replacing some of words. The third line is also paralleled to the first and second lines, replacing some of the words. Here, the image of God is replaced with male and female. The image of God equals male and female. This means that male or female alone does not image God. A roomful of men does not give us the image of God. A roomful of women does not give us the image of God. Instead, to encounter a full image of God, we need

male and female. If we want to encounter the full image of God, we need men and women both. We should not exclude anyone due to their gender but we should include all genders in our church to have the full image of God.

Third, what can we do as those who are the image of God and likeness of God? We can find the answer to this question in v28: *God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”*

As I mentioned, “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” tells us that the intention of God creating human beings are for them to flourish. One thing we should pay attention to is that God does not bless individuals. Instead, God blesses people together to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. This means that, as God creates all living things, provides them with the ability to live and grow and food, intends them to flourish, and guides them, when we participate in God’s creating power by copying what God does and says, provide each other with supports to find their ability and develop it and their needs, intend each other to flourish, and guide each other, human beings can thrive. In other words, when we allow ourselves to depend on each other in order for us to live, grow, thrive, and be guided, human beings can flourish.

Fourth, what is the aim of Jesus’ ministries? As we read, Matthew 5:43-48 tells us about Jesus’ teaching ministry. We love our families and neighbours, and hate our enemies and prosecutors. However, Jesus teaches us to do more for our enemies and prosecutors than for our families and neighbours. We love our families and neighbours, but Jesus teaches us not only to love but also pray for our enemies and prosecutors. (Ed. note: *I think he means*

“persecutors”.) In other words, we should support our enemies and prosecutors with love and prayer. This means that we should allow our enemies and prosecutors to depend on us in order for them to live, grow, thrive, and be guided. Why? Because our heavenly father loves and prays for our enemies and prosecutors, which is shown that our heavenly father provides them with sun and rain. So they can live, grow, thrive, and be guided. Here Jesus’ teaching reminds us that we are the image of God and the likeness of God. So we, the image of God and the likeness of God, should do what our heavenly father does. According to 2 Corinthians 5, Paul proclaims that Jesus’ actions, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection reveal who God is, what God does, and what God says.

Jesus’ ministries show us the image of God and the likeness of God. So Jesus becomes the place where we can encounter God and truly worship God. We can live, grow, thrive, and be guided. Also Jesus’ actions, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection have the power to create us as a new creation. In other words, Jesus’ ministries create us to be restored to the image of God and the likeness of God. So we, the image of God and the likeness of God, should become the place where people can encounter God and truly worship God. So they can live, grow, thrive, and be guided.

Can you tell me a problem we human beings cannot solve? On Tuesdays Barbara Sher led an encounter group whose members had more life problems than us. This experience with the encounter group led Barbara to start the success team. She said, “What if we get together every week and we tell each other what we want? If we do not know what we want, we help each other figure it out. We will make each other do what we want.” She has changed thousands and thousands of people’s lives. One example, when she had the success team taking place in Memphis in summer, one woman in the front row raised her hand. Barbara asked,

“What is your wish?”. She said, “I am tired. I want to go on a cruise”. Barbara asked, “what is your obstacle?” She said, “I have three. I do not have money. I have a sick daughter at home, an adult daughter. I cannot leave her for a second. I’d rather not mention the third.” Before Barbara could ask if anybody had an idea, a guy came running up the aisle, waving a piece of paper, and grabbed a mic and said, “I ran for the Heart Association this morning, and I won a cruise for one. My wife is not going to let me go on the cruise for one. You take it.” Everyone got excited, and applauded, and did not have to worry about money. She said, “That’s sweet, but I really cannot leave my daughter.” A woman on the aisle raised her hand, and said, “I am a public health nurse. Every year to keep our license, we have to give ten days of free work. I have not found anyone. Can you use ten days?” Everybody got excited. Barbara said, “you have to tell us the third obstacle.” She said, “It is embarrassing. She is in bed because she is physically injured and she is frightened because her ex-husband is stalking her.” Then the room fell silent. Suddenly a voice came from the back of the room. Barbara said, “she never forgets his voice.” He said, “I am a cop. What is his name?” She went on the cruise. Barbara said, “we defend each other’s dreams coming true. The daughter is going to become a teacher. She is going to understand kids who are scared. When we make someone else’s dream come true, it echoes. It echoes in practical and wonderful ways.

What problem does your family have? What problem does your church have? What problem does our city, country, and world have? When we, the image of God, copy what God has done for us, we will solve all the problems. When we become the place where our families, friends, neighbours, and communities encounter God and truly worship God, we ourselves, our families, friends, neighbours, and communities will live, grow, thrive, and be guided. Amen.

I hope you have enjoyed the September/October issue of Graceviews. The next issue will be available early in early November. **The deadline will be Sunday, October 25.**

If you have anything you wish to share with your church family, please make your editor very happy by writing it up and sending it to me by email. Anyone can submit anything, either written by yourself, or something you have found interesting that you think would interest others. I try to provide a variety of rich and interesting reading, and am always happy when I can publish a piece with a byline other than my own.

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