

August 2011



August

28

Service of Celebration

Join us as we celebrate what God has done and is doing at Free Grace by ordaining and installing our elders, particularizing as a church (moving from a mission church to a "real" church) and feasting together.

Want to help with the supper?
Talk with Maureen.

“What is a drop of rain, compared to the storm? What is a thought, compared to a mind? Our unity is full of wonder, which your tiny individualism... cannot even conceive. The Many, *System Shock 2*”

Duct Tape Christianity

What does it mean to be bound together?

Our vision at Free Grace is broken people bound together in Christ for God's glory. We talk about it all the time. Perhaps it is a bit distressing how often the "broken people" part comes up. Are we really that broken? Apparently.

Also we are Presbyterian so it is hard to avoid the "for God's glory." After all, our catechism starts out by declaring it as the first part of our chief end, our primary purpose, and I like to think we live out what we say, or at least try.

But what about that "bound together" part in the middle? It sounds a bit scary, like some bad corporate team-building exercise involving duct tape. Is this just another of those nice things we talk about without really meaning anything by it?

The answer has to be no. We talk about being bound together because Scripture makes it clear that we are and we need to be. God does not reach out to individual people and create persons of God all over the place. Rather, Scripture talks about the people of God, the sheep of his pasture (and be honest, when you read that you envision a flock of sheep in a pasture, not just one sheep).

The great covenant promise repeated throughout Scripture is clear as God promises, "I will be your God and you will be my people." The promise is plural. The central fact of



redemption is our union with Christ. We are united to him in faith, receiving his

righteousness by grace, and have died and been raised to new life with him. This union

“A believing community is the context for the life of faith.”
Eugene Peterson

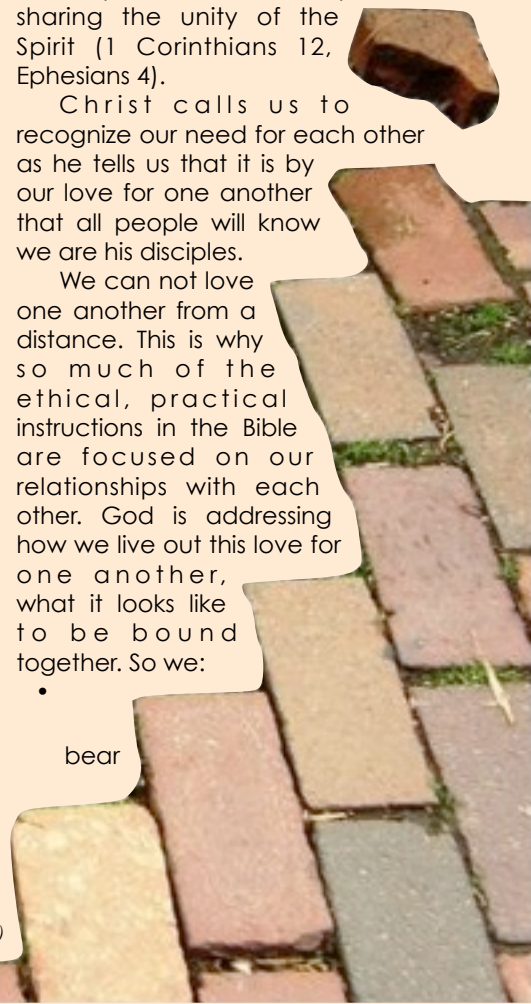
with him unites us to each other. As Paul says, we are one body sharing the unity of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4).

Christ calls us to recognize our need for each other as he tells us that it is by our love for one another that all people will know we are his disciples.

We can not love one another from a distance. This is why so much of the ethical, practical instructions in the Bible are focused on our relationships with each other. God is addressing how we live out this love for one another, what it looks like to be bound together. So we:

• bear

(continued on back)



Duct Tape Christianity (cont. from the front)

- one another's burdens (Galatians 6);
- bear with one another and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4);
- encourage and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5);
- and we respond to each other's needs (1 John 3).

Beyond even these things, we meet together We meet together because we can not do these things if we don't know each other, hear each other, and pray for each other.

We meet not only Sunday mornings for our corporate time of worship. We have other times we gather. The men get together the third Thursday of each month to live this out as we hang out and get to know each other and what is going on in our lives. We call this Men's Night. The women get together most months for the same purpose — whether over crafts, going to the art walk and dessert, or watching a movie together. The whole church is gathering for ice cream on August 12.

It is more than just hanging out, though. We have been gathering Monday evenings to wrestle together with who God is and who we are and what it means to follow him. We are finishing up our study of our relationship with God as he has revealed it in his covenants. Beginning August 17 we will move to Wednesdays and start a new theme for our time together. We will be spending the evening discussing the sermon, taking it deeper together. It is a time to ask the questions that the sermon raised and didn't answer, as we wrestle together with the implications of Scripture in our lives.

This concept of being bound together is how Free Grace started. We started as a home group, gathering to explore God's Word in relationship together. We will be starting up the home groups again this fall to continue coming together over God's Word.

Being bound together is not an optional part of the church or the Christian life. It is who we are made to be.

	MEN'S NIGHT August 18, 8:00 PM NEW LOCATION!
	Come share some ICE CREAM August 12, 6:30 PM @ the Almquists'
	Wednesday, 7:00 PM <i>Taking the sermon deeper together.</i> new study, new date starts August 17

Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people.

Charles Spurgeon

End of the Fiscal Year Update

Our fiscal year ended on June 30. This past fiscal year saw us take great steps as we faced our first full year of expenses connected with Sunday worship and the building. This spring and summer we have been dealing with a difficult financial situation as that reality and the current economy caught up with us. Yet, as we look back at the fiscal year, God has been very good to us. Our financial situation is not great, but everywhere we look, we see God's care for his church.

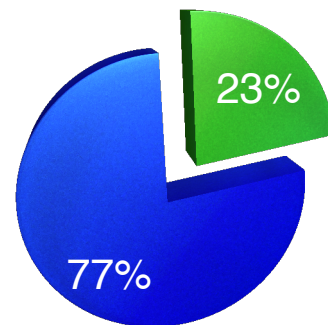
Highlights

- Giving was up 4%
- Member giving was up 45%
- Expenses were down 2%
- Outflows shifted from ministry to administrative (building/utilities)

In summary, while local giving increased from approximately 13% to 23% of offerings (a good indicator more people are attending) it will be essential to continue to pursue outside sources.

While the funding sources and challenges will remain until the congregation grows over the next three to four years, it is time to start thinking like an established church, i.e., paying back funds loaned to Free Grace in small amounts, increasing mission/community giving, and preparing for a bright future by setting aside resources to make future transitions easier.

Sources of Income
FY 2011



- Partners
- Local Giving

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How to Give

Checks may be made out to **Free Grace** and sent to the church.
Or you can give online. Instructions can be found at: <http://www.freegrace.us/give>