



January 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

The beloved Christian hymn “Amazing Grace” was penned by the English poet and Anglican clergyman John Newton to accompany a sermon he preached on New Year’s Day, 1773. Over the last 250 years, it has become an immensely popular hymn, particularly in the United States. Used for both sacred and secular purposes, it has become an anthem of hope and triumph during dark times and an offertory of gratitude in times of celebration.

The text for the hymn takes its inspiration from 1 Chronicles, in which King David responds to the prophet Nathan’s words that God intends to continue David’s royal line for eternity. The text reads:

*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And even this was a small thing in your sight, O God; you have also spoken of your servant’s house for a great while to come. You regard me as someone of high rank, O Lord God!’—17:16-17*

Newton wrote the words of “Amazing Grace” from his own personal experience. In 1748, while Newton served as captain of a ship in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, it is said that a violent storm off the coast of Ireland struck his vessel so severely that he had no other option than to call out to God for mercy. This moment marked Newton’s turn toward God, what he called “the hour I first believed.” Eventually leaving the slave trade behind, Newton then began studying Christian theology and was ordained in the Church of England in 1764. He served as a minister in only, England, where he began writing hymns.

Folklore or not, Newton’s Christian conversion offers us pause to consider our own relationship with God. Not many of us can resonate with Newton’s condition: a less-than-complicit actor in one of the greatest tragedies in all of human history. Between 1525 and 1866, it is estimated that 12.5 million Africans were shipped to the New World through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Newton played and profited from a role in this. Can God’s grace extend even to one like him, who treated other human beings as salable goods? While our transgressions against God and neighbor may never amount to anything close to the sins of John Newton, God is not in the business of ranking sin. Sin is sin. Transgressions are transgressions.

And by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, all that is lost is found again.

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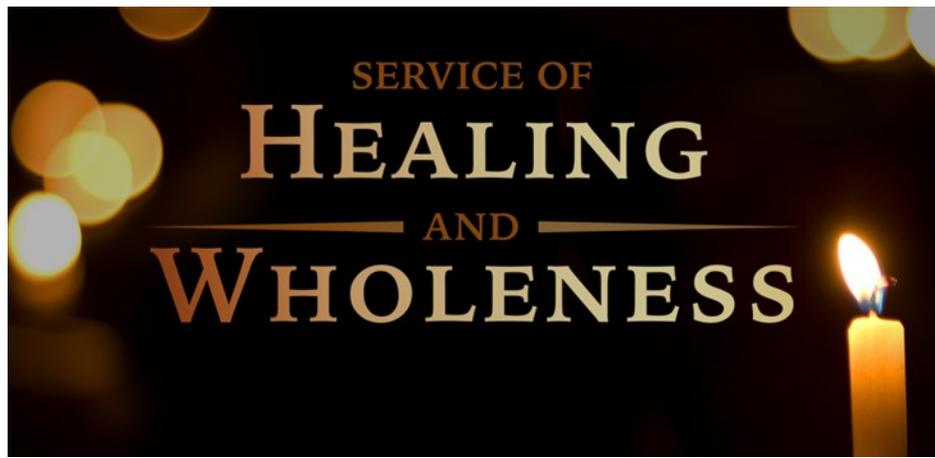
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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:  
TUESDAY THRU FRIDAY  
9:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M.



**A Service of Healing and Wholeness**  
**February 14th**  
**7pm**

Healing services are a way for us to encounter God's love and grace in our complex world. Whether you are dealing with a specific grief or hurt, or simply looking for a quiet place to simply be in the presence of God, this service is for you. The service will include time for peaceful reflection and prayer, candle lighting, song, and healing practices such as laying on of hands and anointing with oil. All are welcome!



February 1	Nelanie Simpson	February 15	Deanna Piiparinen
February 2	Robert J. Brown	February 16	Joshua Garry
February 2	Janneane Gerot	February 16	Clayton Lee
February 2	Trevante Wilburn	February 18	Ralph Green
February 3	Barbara Butts	February 18	Dacia Van Eenenaam
February 5	Joseph Slabchuck	February 18	Aleesha Gill
February 8	Louise Jeffries	February 19	Cherie Danforth
February 9	Harold Johnson II	February 23	Jeremy Gerot
February 9	Kurt Riordan	February 23	Eliza Schweitzer
February 10	Paul W. Brown	February 27	Linda McCullough
February 12	Kathryn Ann Kolton	February 27	Maksim Klug
February 13	Valerie Vernyuy	February 28	Percy Pike

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*We are quickly approaching the season of Lent, the quiet preparation season leading to Easter. For Lent this year, I invite you to join me and your church family in a closer study of "Amazing Grace" as a way to discover once again the grace of God that is active in our own lives.*

Starting on February 22, Ash Wednesday, and continuing for the five Sundays of Lent, we will be looking at how various characters in the Bible experienced the grace of God.

We'll begin with the Old Testament Sinner In Chief, King David, who broke almost all of the Ten Commandments in one swift stroke, but who was called to be the head of the dynastic family line of Jesus himself. We'll then consider Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet who found God's grace even in suffering. From there we will move into the New Testament to The Prodigal Son, The Blind Man, and The Woman at the Well, who would each experience God's grace according to their need. Finally, we'll marvel at the story of Paul who was transformed from a persecutor of Christians to Jesus' chief evangelist.

What do we have in common with these biblical characters? How can their experience of God's grace give us hope for the same in our lives? What does it take to actually receive God's grace? These questions and many more will guide us through Lent.

*On March 15, join me in Fellowship Hall for a potluck dinner and a special viewing of the 2006 movie, "Amazing Grace," which follows the life of English abolitionist William Wilberforce, whose spiritual guide was John Newton.*

John Newton died in 1807 in poor health and nearly blind. But his close encounter with God's grace, and the hope his experience can bring to others, lives on in the hymn that biographer Jonathan Aitken estimates is sung annually 10 million times. The Library of Congress has more than 3,000 recordings catalogued, by music giants like Judy Collins, Aretha Franklin, Rod Stewart, and Willie Nelson.

But the message is simple, captured in the first verse:

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.*

Thanks be to God,

*Andrew*



# WOMEN OF GRACE WIDOWS' FUND

## Women of Grace Board News

With regret, the WOG board has accepted the resignation of Heather White, but with deep appreciation for all her work over the past years. Heather was one of the original board members when the organization was formed in 2008 on the shores of Lake Malawi. Alongside Grace Chiumia and Sam Chirwa, she helped direct the early housing and farm projects, always working towards a sustainable system to support and empower the widows. Heather was sensitive to the challenges of cultural differences and worked to make smooth tweaks and changes over the years. Heather plans to continue her volunteer service in Malawi through MELT, and in several local NNY organizations. Many, many thanks, Heather! Angela Elmer has joined the Women of Grace Widows Fund as a new board member. Angela is a member of First Presbyterian Church and is active in the music department and various local mission projects. Welcome Angela!

## Looking Forward

Finally in May, after a 4 year hiatus, Kathy Curtis and Margot McGorman will return to Malawi on behalf of the WOGWF. They will visit the sewing project, and look at housing projects that have been completed in the past 3 years of Covid. Kathy and Margot will meet with the widows, and listen carefully to their joys, hopes, and concerns in order to discern any new future directions for the WOGWF. We are very blessed to finally re-connect with our friends in Malawi!

The Women of Grace 2022 newsletter is available at First Presbyterian Church and on  
The Women of Grace website: [www.womenofgracewidows.org](http://www.womenofgracewidows.org).

If you would like to help,

**A matching grant of up to \$3000 will be provided for any WOGWF donations received from Dec 15, 2022 thru Jan 31, 2023 either through the mail or electronically.**

Please make your check payable to: **First Presbyterian Church with WOGWF in Memo Line.**

Mail check and completed form to **Watertown First Presbyterian Church, Attention: WOGWF, 403 Washington St., Watertown, NY 13601.**

For online donations click the **DONATE** button on our website at [www.womenofgracewidows.org](http://www.womenofgracewidows.org)

*Thank you for helping us reach this matching goal!*

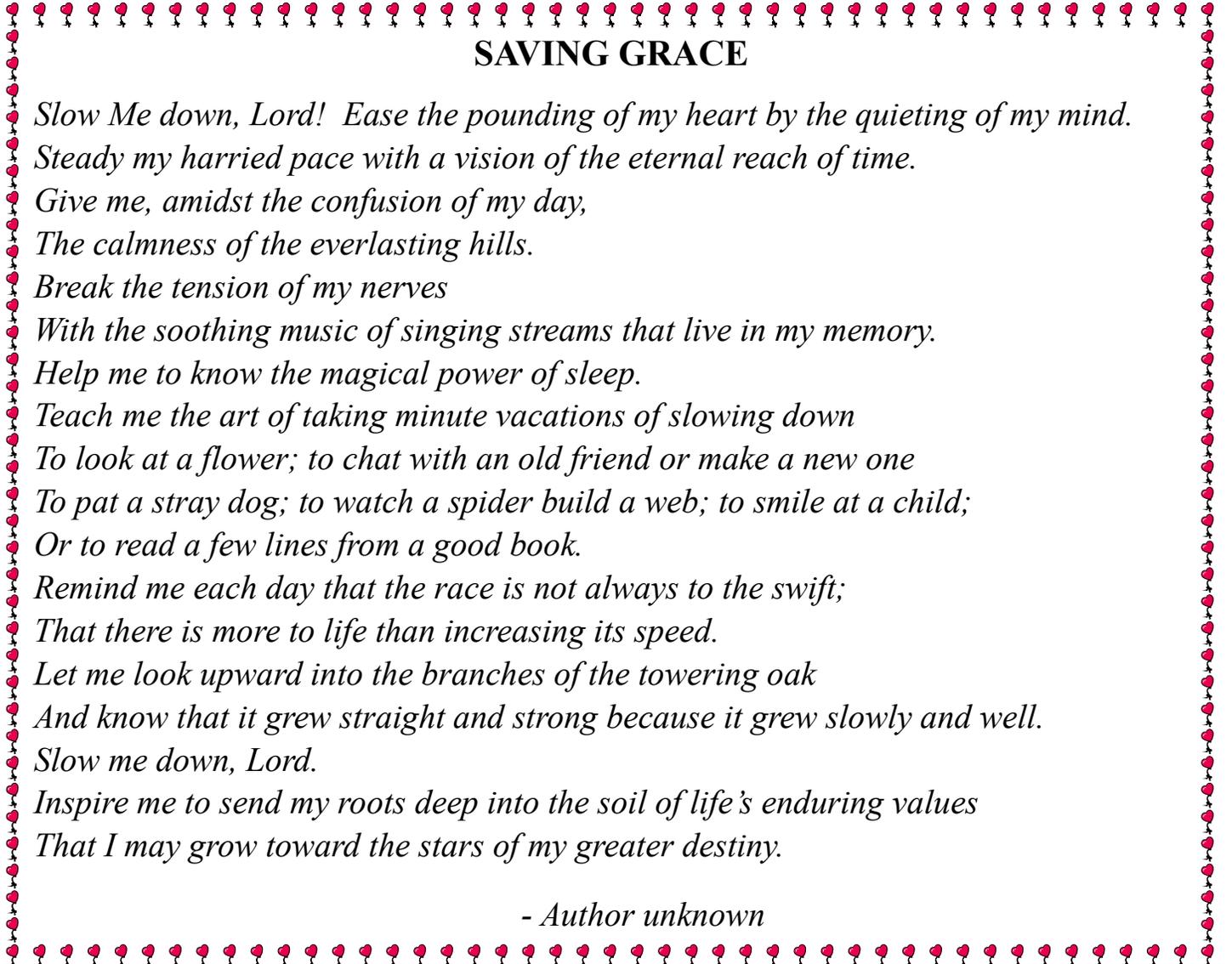


# Happy New Year Presbyterian Women

*A new year is upon us, and we welcome 2023 with our first PW meeting on Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. This gathering will be at Stone Presbyterian Church with the meeting portion to begin at 11am and lunch following. Bring your own sandwich - soup will be provided. Bring an example of your favorite craft, hobby, or collection, to share; whatever your passion!*

*Last year we did not ask for any pledges or gifts. We managed to give generously, despite having very little income. This year we would like to resume the pledge collection so that we might look to new options for our giving. Please search your hearts and give accordingly. Thank you in advance for your generosity.*

*Checks may be made out to **Presbyterian Women of Jeff Co.** You may mail your gifts to Maureen Gorman at 380 Pawling St. Watertown, NY 13601  
Maureen Gorman, Treasurer*



## SAVING GRACE

*Slow Me down, Lord! Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind.*

*Steady my harried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time.*

*Give me, amidst the confusion of my day,*

*The calmness of the everlasting hills.*

*Break the tension of my nerves*

*With the soothing music of singing streams that live in my memory.*

*Help me to know the magical power of sleep.*

*Teach me the art of taking minute vacations of slowing down*

*To look at a flower; to chat with an old friend or make a new one*

*To pat a stray dog; to watch a spider build a web; to smile at a child;*

*Or to read a few lines from a good book.*

*Remind me each day that the race is not always to the swift;*

*That there is more to life than increasing its speed.*

*Let me look upward into the branches of the towering oak*

*And know that it grew straight and strong because it grew slowly and well.*

*Slow me down, Lord.*

*Inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values*

*That I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny.*

*- Author unknown*



Open Tuesday & Thursday  
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and  
1st Saturday of each month  
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

The Spare Closet volunteers have decided to decorate a tree at the 2023 Festival of Trees. The theme this year is *Peace, Love and Joy*. We are asking for any ornaments saying either *Peace, Love or Joy* on them. Also, any décor items with same words, such as plaques, mugs, blankets, etc. We will be putting our spin on the tree by creating our own garlands with doll clothes hanging on them to represent what we help the public with. We are looking for doll clothes in 14" size (such as Barbie or Ken clothing) and also accessories for female or male dolls. Accessories would reflect anything that the Closet is able to help our patrons with. No furniture please. Also, we will be making a star out of hangers for the top of the tree. Our volunteers will be shopping and looking for items to fit our cause throughout the summer. The tree will have a description of the purpose of *The Spare Closet* and how we help spread the *peace, love and joy* throughout the community. Items collected will be displayed and arranged below the tree in baskets or containers. A couple of suggestions for a large container would be a red pick up truck (popular for the season) or Santa's sleigh. We will be seeing how the shopping goes.

The past season was very busy for the *Spare Closet* and the following are items needed. Personal hygiene items (preferably in travel size containers), purses, **size 3T and above girl's clothes**, and sweatpants for men and women.

We do not need summer clothing. We will accept them again later in the season. Please no shoes either. The need for them will be announced later. Thank you for your help.



# AMAZING *grace*



ASH WEDNESDAY  
David



WEEK ONE  
Isaiah of Babylon



WEEK TWO  
The Prodigal Son



WEEK THREE  
The Blind Man



WEEK FOUR  
The Woman at the Well



WEEK FIVE  
Paul

LENT

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Join us for  
SUNDAY WORSHIP AT  
**10:00 A.M.**

Listen on your radio  
**WATN 1240AM** or  
watch the service live from  
[www.watertownfirstpres.org](http://www.watertownfirstpres.org)  
or

[www.facebook.com/watertownfpc](http://www.facebook.com/watertownfpc)

If you miss a week of worship it is just a click away.  
just visit our website at [www.watertownfirstpres.org](http://www.watertownfirstpres.org).

No one has  
ever seen  
God;  
but if we love  
one another,  
God lives in us  
and his love is  
made complete  
in us.

1 JOHN 4:12, NIV