

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the "landscape" we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we're learning and doing.



A People for God

TIM BARBER
(1947-1998)

The Bible is an amazing document. Here is a book with some 40 different human authors written over a period of 2000 years claiming to present one complete message for all humanity. Weaving its way through all the history is a very simple thread: Covenant. The Bible is God's history book of His people, giving marvelous promises to them, and then fulfilling those promises. In a society that glorifies independence, we have much to learn about "covenant."



A church should be a place where people experience covenant. When we look at the New Testament description of the church, meetings of the church are hardly emphasized. Instead, a lifestyle is presented in all its hope, encouragement, weakness, and failings. We should be eternally grateful that the lifestyle given us in the pages of the New Testament is not theoretical or polished clean of its flaws, but is presented in the practical and very pragmatic arena of the early church. Here are these often small bodies of people, without the benefit of a Christian cultural tradition or heritage behind them, trying to overcome profound prejudices and human shortcomings. They are forging a family-life that would allow them to speak of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the grace and power of God coursing through those relationships that empowered them to work then and can empower them to work now. Something is supernatural about it all; something impossible to duplicate through human effort. But it requires cooperation: a willingness to give over our precious individual prerogatives and look for God's grace in a committed relationship to our brothers and sisters. It means casting our lot together and choosing to say "yes" to God's invitation to join His human family. That's covenant patterned after God's covenant with us and only possible as His grace works through our relationships.

For some people, community, commitment, and

covenant are scary words. Our response may be cautious and tentative, perhaps because our culture fears and resists these Biblical ideals. Yet it is only by walking through the door of commitment to each other that our "yes" to God has substance.

If we look at Scripture correctly, we see God's intention to bring to Himself, not a host of unrelated individuals, but a body of people who are correctly loving one another. We find grace in this commitment to say that the resources God has entrusted to me are available to you if you need them. If it is in a properly ordered community, then such openness and generosity can be nurtured and brought to maturity.

Such a community, however, may soon become introverted if it doesn't take the next step in God's call and turn its service outward. Like a family dwelling, there are times a church community must focus on family issues and put the furniture in order, clean the carpets, and do some general maintenance. Eventually, though, the need is to show hospitality, to reach out and invite people in. All that I'm describing may sound idealistic, but I'm very grateful to have been part of such a church community the past fourteen years. We have had our trials and challenges, but time and again I have seen God's hand reach down to steady us, protect us, lead us on. The one constant that has kept our relationships intact in the midst of change has been the undergirding conviction that God has called us together. Commitment we express to one another is an important part of our obedience toward Him. I know that such commitments can go awry or become confused with blind loyalty, but I also observe that without covenant love and commitment among God's people, any group will be weak and accomplish little for the Kingdom of God.

Ed's note: In view of our upcoming celebration of the 50th anniversary of the start of the Grace Haven Ministry Center, forerunner of Grace Fellowship Church, it seemed most appropriate to feature as this month's lead article one which was written for a special issue of "COMMONLIFE" magazine back in 1989 by Tim Barber, who was the first Presiding Elder of Grace Fellowship Church.

HAPPY 50TH

Ranch Tries to ‘Save’ Lost Youths

JOAN BROWN

“We take them in.”

Runaways, drug addicts, lost kids from New York to California—Grace Haven Ranch, outside Mansfield, opens its doors to take them all in.

Grace Haven is a religious experiment in modern-day salvation where the emphasis is directing those “lost kids” to Christ.

The leaders of this unique “open house” are **Gordon Walker** and **Ray Nethery**, who began this experiment two years ago with the support of **Harold Bolesky**, industrialist.



Gordon Walker — *“...kids love working.”*

Walker is a graduate of Southwest Baptist Seminary and worked with young people as state director of Campus Crusade for Christ.



Steve James, on leave from the Navy, and **Don Swearingen** from California enjoy the beauty of Grace Haven Ranch set in the hills of southern Richland County—an excellent atmosphere for thinking.

It was Walker’s thought that young people might have a better chance to get back on the right track in a home situation where the right kinds of Christian influence could “seep in” on a 24 hour-a-day basis. He wanted to operate outside the structure of an institutional church.

Bolesky, willing to give it a try, built two new homes where the Walker and Nethery families, as the house parents, could offer “the right kind of Christian influence.” Now these homes provide a haven for the “lost sheep” who come to stay: a day, a week, a month.

Last week, after a one-day-stay, two young “drifters” were set on the right course—back to their families in Iowa. The girl, 15, and the boy, 17, had been spotted by Grace Haven residents in a local restaurant. The kids, on parole for drug abuse, were running away to New York in a “borrowed” car. They eagerly accepted the invitation of a night’s

lodging at Grace Haven. Once there, they were “reachable” and, after a day-long session in logic, were persuaded to fly back to Iowa to home and parents.



Ray Nethery — *“...whomever God is leading.”*

“Our purpose is to bring them to a personal relationship with Christ and to a healthy knowledge of what it means to relate to a body of believers.”

ANNIVERSARY!

Neither Nethery nor Walker receive a salary since as a non-institution, Grace Haven produces no income. But friends help out and neighbors often donate food. Mrs Walker, Mrs. Nethery and the girl residents have canned fruits, jams, jellies, vegetables and juices for the winter—almost all gifts from well-wishers.

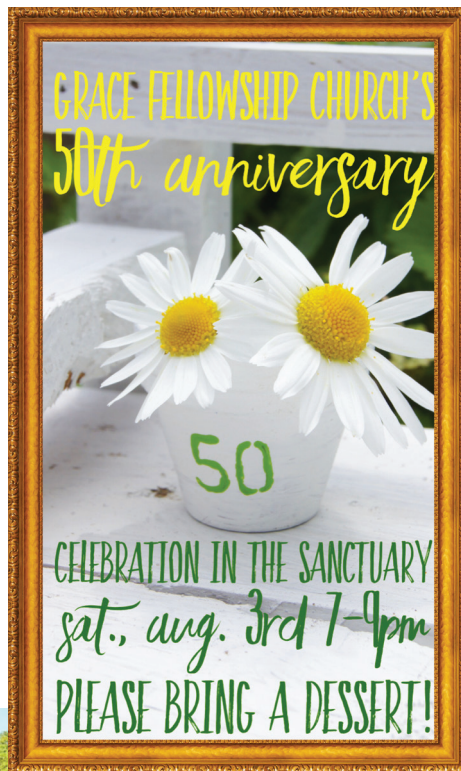
At least 20 people sit down to dinner every evening in one of the homes, and sometimes 75 show up on Sundays for a total monthly food bill of \$600. The guests are asked to contribute \$2/day if they can. The low “rent” has a catch: half-a-day’s study of the Bible, and half-a-day’s work. In addition, there are 3 supplemental evening meetings.



Betsy Baltuth, 23, graduate of Ohio State, helps Mary Sue Walker prepare juices and fruits for the many guests who come to dinner.



Jack Creagh earns his temporary “keep” with outside chores. A half day’s work is required of all residents. He was picked up on his way west to join the forestry service. He told us he wasn’t a Christian yet, “but a little is rubbing off.”



“We’re open to whomever God is leading here,” said Nethery, adding that he “hopes God will keep others away.”

“Some people who come here have not been Christians and have become Christians” although there is no requirement that young people embrace that concept. He does not especially want publicity about the ranch since youngsters across the country have already heard of Grace Haven strictly through word of mouth.

Don Swearingen has called the ranch “home” for about 3 months. Don became a Christian in California. “You’ll never know about this place until you’ve lived here,” Don says. “You don’t want to get as much as you give. Here with brothers and sisters we’ve found the love of Christ.”



← At left is Grace Fellowship Church as it looks today but before the new red metal roof went on last year in a beautiful photo taken by **Jacob Feia**.

Ed’s Note: This article is slightly adapted from a full page spread written by Joan Brown with the B & W Photos by Otto Schmidt. It appeared in the *Mansfield News Journal* on September 13, 1970.

Miracle in Montana

Baby Hudson Robert Burleigh is home!

DONNA KURTZ

Recently, David and Naomi Burleigh and their two boys moved from Alabama to Bozeman, MT, where they joined the staff of a Christian camp, Yellowstone Adventure Camp. A few weeks before baby #3 was due, Naomi began to bleed and had to have an emergency C-section in the Bozeman hospital on July 2 because a portion of the baby's placenta had prematurely separated from the uterus (placenta abruptio).

Immediately Baby Hudson was transferred to a large hospital NICU in Billings, leaving Naomi to recover in the Bozeman hospital. David and his dad, Mark Burleigh, traveled to Billings to be with Hudson.

Meanwhile, as Hudson was receiving world-wide prayer from many of us, grandparents arrived—Jerry (former pastor of GFC) and Laura King, Jean Ruark, Mark and Pat Burleigh. Many tubes helped take care of Hudson's lack of oxygen, and an MRI that was normal prompted great rejoicing by all.

Then a too-rapid heart beat became the newest concern. But a few days of medicine took care of this—and Hudson went home, and the family left the wonderful Ronald McDonald House!



Hudson Robert Burleigh on July 3



Baby Hudson in the Billings, MT NICU on July 4



1. Naomi holding Hudson in the Billings NICU on July 7.



2.

2. Hudson getting some Zzzzz's on July 10 — with fewer tubes at last!



3.

3. On the way home—finally, on July 20. Hudson's not sure he likes the idea!

AUGUST 2019

- 2-4** GFC Campout begins at 6 p.m. and runs until Sunday morning.
- 3** GFC 50th Anniversary Celebration, 7-9 p.m. with a dessert bar following reminiscing and sharing.
- 4** Pastoral Elder Robert Key preaching.
- 8** Women of Grace "Momentum" Bible Study 6:30-8 p.m. Location T.B.D.
- 10** 7 p.m. – Grace Youth Production Company musical "Pirates of Hawaii" in GFC sanctuary.
- 11** Pastoral Elder Jon Vega preaching in a.m. with baptism and eucharist. 2:30 p.m. GYPC "Pirates" performance.
- 17** 7 p.m. GYPC "Pirates" performance.
- 18** Pastoral Elder Robert Key preaching in a.m. 2:30 p.m. GYPC "Pirates" performance.
- 22** W. O. G. "Momentum" Bible Study 6:30-8 p.m. Location T.B.D.
- 25** Pastoral Elder Jadaé Fox preaching.

Grace Fellowship Church (Personnel list will return next month)
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