



Monthly Musings

Gospel of Grace by Jane Bailey

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It had been one of those mornings when nothing went right, including my drive to work. My hair was a mess, traffic was congested, and generally life was chaotic. While stopped at a red light, I glanced at a rundown church squeezed between two strip malls and noticed the name, Gospel of Grace Covenant Church. “Okay, God,” I dared, “show me some grace today. I certainly need something.”

When I pulled into the office parking lot, I glanced around. No grace here, I thought. The morning routine at school division headquarters droned before me. Newly released test scores of the district had been in the morning paper, so the phones were ringing with questions about score discrepancies. Statistical analysis was the name of the game. No grace to be found as I worked the numbers, the formulaic answer to how well we’re teaching students. With numbers dancing before me, an e-mail titled ‘Invitation’ caught my eye and I clicked to see that Central Office staff were invited to the stadium behind our building to participate in field day ceremonies. I didn’t know what field day it was, and didn’t expect to find any grace there, but at least some fresh morning air would be a respite from number crunching.

I joined the throng of school division personnel heading to the stadium where we joined parents in the stands, but we were the bulk of the cheerleaders. The large stadium was mostly empty. Someone handed out rhythm sticks, pom-poms and banners just as the high school drumline bounded onto the field. “Something important is about to happen!” the pounding cadence announced, just as the emcee roared a welcome as the first school’s students entered the gates. As I leaned over to ask what field day this was, I caught sight of the wheelchairs in the distance, the hobbling gait of the infirmed, the crooked smiles of those unable to maintain facial composure and realized in an instant this was the school division’s special education field day. As our cheers went up, school after school of students, little

ones and not-so-little ones streamed into the stadium.

Our cheers got louder, our rhythm sticks pounded, our banners waved, and the parade passed by, with grins abounding. Teachers pushed wheelchairs, held hands, cajoled the foot draggers and held up school signs announcing where their charges were from. Class after class, child after child, streamed on. Each one giving us a look that said, “Yes! We are here! We can do this!” And oh, what grace it took. The grace of teachers giving up time, lots of time, to get ready



for this day; the children themselves, working painstakingly to do whatever it would take to compete. Yes, it was grace that streamed into that stadium amid the raucous chaos of a number-crunching school division, reminding us that achievement is more than the sum of score reports; reminding us that one teacher can make a difference; reminding us

there is hope in a chaotic world.

A chaplain serving in the Iraq war noted that he served at “the juncture of chaos and grace.” Wherever there is a juncture, the path splits to either side—toward hope or despair, like a scale that can be tipped to one side or the other. That chaplain works to tip the scale of war toward peace and hope amidst the rubble and clutter. Like the volunteer at our local hospital who each Sunday walks up to the nursing station and asks, “Who didn’t have any visitors this week?” and trots off down the hall, most often to the indigent ward, to pay a visit to the visit-less. A bearer of grace, tipping the scale away from loneliness.

Tippers are everywhere. Look for chaos, and you’ll find them; the ones who coax and cajole the world to a higher plane of meaning, to a more beautiful place, yes, to a kinder, gentler, more civilized place. The teachers who put together the special education field day are tippers all.

As I headed home that night and passed the Gospel of Grace Covenant Church, my hair was still a mess, the traffic was still congested, but life generally was no longer chaotic. The balance had been tipped on the side of grace.

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