

Grace for Today

G.R.A.C.E. Emmaus Community Newsletter December 2025

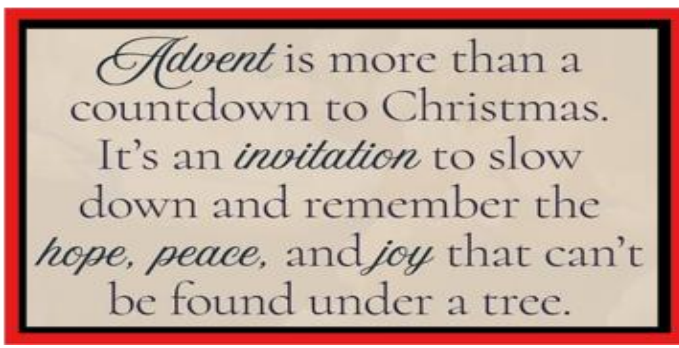
Coming Events

Saturday, Dec 6, Gathering at Pleasant Retreat, Tyler, Potluck at noon and Worship after

Saturday, Jan 17, Gathering at Grace Methodist, Palestine, Potluck at noon and Worship after

Saturday, Feb 21, Gathering at First Methodist, Gladewater, Potluck at noon and Worship after

Coming soon at Disciples Crossing Camp...
Men's Walk 112, Mar 5 – 8
Women's Walk 113, Mar 12 – 17
Pray about sponsoring a Pilgrim and get the application submitted!



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Find More on the G.R.A.C.E. Website:

www.GRACEEmmaus.com

Community Lay Director's Corner

The end of 2025 is here, and with it, my time as your GRACE Emmaus Community Lay Director is coming to a close. What a gift this season has been. I have loved every gathering, every Candlelight, every Sponsor's Hour—and yes, even every Board Meeting!

I have felt so much love and support from my fellow Board Members and from this entire Community. Time and again, I have been reminded that God doesn't call the equipped—He equips the called. Every time I hear someone say they don't feel ready or capable, I just smile. God loves it when we step into something we feel unprepared for, because that's when He shows up the most. If everything were easy, we might miss His power and His glory on display.

And He doesn't just show up—He surrounds you with angels who serve, pray, and walk alongside you.

So the next time you're asked to give a talk, take on a leadership role, serve on the Board, or even lead a Walk... say yes. Step in with open hands and watch what God—and this beautiful community—can do!

De Colores!

Sandra Grasch

Community Lay Director



Save the Date: Emergency First Aid and CPR Training



Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 9:00am. The location has yet to be determined but will be in the Tyler area. The **CPR** session takes four hours, the **First Aid** takes two hours, and **Stop the Bleed** (optional) session is one hour.

Interested Community Members, please email Paul Breedlove with any questions and to register:

paul@breedlovelandscape.com

Music Books - You asked! We listened!



After several requests from the Community, the Board of Directors is working on creating new music books. It is a slow process, but this is the beginning!

We are asking for suggestions for some new songs to add to our book. If you have a favorite song that you would love for us to sing at gatherings, send an email to Brian Jones, our Community Music Coordinator (bjones171958@gmail.com) or let one of the other Board Members know.

Our musicians will go through the recommendations to see if they are “singable”, and we will have to make sure they are CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International) approved so we will be licensed to use the songs in our worship. Let us hear from you!

Introducing our Next Community Lay Director

I am Debbie Hays, your current Assistant Community Lay Director. I went on GRACE Walk #8 at Camp Timberline and sat at the Table of Ruth. I have been involved in our Community for 25 years, and I have had the wonderful opportunity to serve King Jesus for 64 years. As we move into the holidays, I pray that you and your families will be honored and blessed with God’s love. One of my favorite stories of Jesus birth is in Luke 1:26-79.

Please be in prayer for our spring Men’s and Women’s Walks. We will need agape. Please work in your reunion groups on agape. Also, remember we need you to sponsor Pilgrims. Be thinking and praying about people in your circle who would welcome the opportunity to go on a Walk.

We, the Board Members will be looking forward to your participation in 2026. The Men’s Walk is scheduled for March 5-8, 2026, and the Women’s Walk is scheduled for March 12-15, 2026.



I am thankful to you all,
Debbie Hays
Assistant Community Lay Director

New Year changes to our Community Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors consists of 15 voting Members, who serve 3-year terms, with 5 Members rotating off the Board every year.

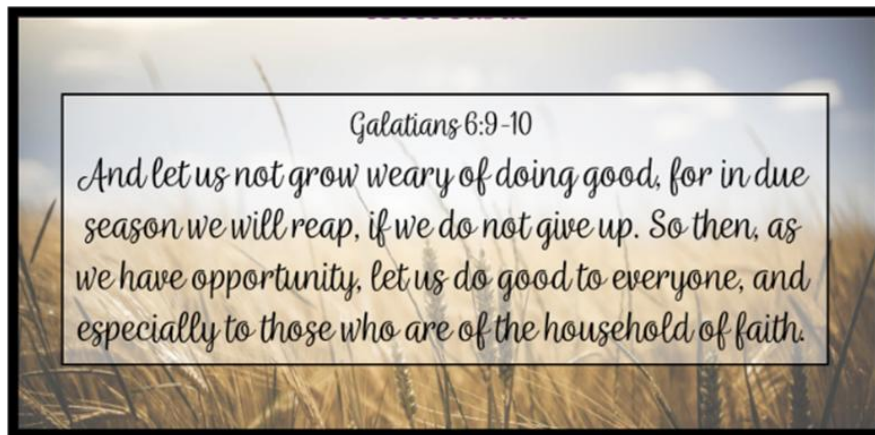
Sincere thanks to these outgoing Members for their service:

- Kevin Abney
- Brad Burton
- Nancy Edwards
- Ken Sides
- John Webb

Please welcome these Community Members who will be joining the Board of Directors for the 2026-2028 term.

- Blake Burton
- CJ Cox
- Pam McAdams
- Mary Rhoades
- Dawn Woods

Special thank you to Rev Jim Pickens who has been serving as our Community Spiritual Director, and welcome to the new Community Spiritual Director, Rev Kara Mitchell, and to the new Assistant Community Spiritual Director, Rev Brian Walker.



Closer Than You Think

When the Disciples saw Jesus in the middle of their stormy night, they called Him a ghost, an illusion. To them the glow was anything but God.

When we see gentle lights on the horizon, we often have the same reaction. We dismiss occasional kindness as accidents, random acts, or anomalies, anything but God.

And because we look for the bonfire, we often miss the candle.

Because we listen for the shout, we miss the whisper.

But it is in burnished candles that God comes and through whispers promises He speaks. When you have doubts, look around. He is closer than you think.

Jesus spoke to them saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I, do not be afraid." Matthew 14:27

John Webb, GRACE Emmaus Walk 86

Love Came Walking Beside Us

As December settles in, lights begin to twinkle, and carols fill the air, we are reminded that Christmas is, at its heart, a story of love and grace coming close. It's the story of a Savior who didn't stay distant but came to walk among us... God in flesh, Emmanuel, "God with us."

For those of us living our Fourth Days, that truth should sound familiar. On our Emmaus Walk, we experienced Christ walking beside us, often in ways we didn't recognize until later, in the talks, the laughter, the tears, the songs, the breaking of bread (the fear of scorpions!). Just like the travelers on the road to Emmaus, our hearts burned within us as He revealed His love and grace through others.

Christmas is God's love revealed in the most personal way, not through power or perfection, but through presence. Grace came, wrapped not in gold, but in swaddling clothes. The light of the world arrived in the dark of night, so that no matter how dim our path may seem, we could know we are never alone.

As Fourth Dayers, we are called to carry that same love and grace into our everyday lives. To be Christ's presence to others... the warm smile at the checkout line, the extra patience with a weary soul, the quiet prayer for someone who's hurting, the hug to someone unlovable. Each act of love we share is another way that Christ continues to walk among His people today.

So, this Christmas, as you celebrate the birth of Jesus, remember that His coming wasn't just a moment in Bethlehem, it's an ongoing miracle in our own hearts. The same Jesus who came to the manger walks beside you on your Fourth Day, reminding you that His love still changes everything.

May your Christmas be filled with the warmth of His presence, the peace of His grace, and the joy of knowing that Love still walks beside us.



De Colores,

Charlene Burton
GRACE Emmaus Registrar

The Spring Walks are sooner than we realize and you can help!

- **Pray, Pray, Pray for our Fall Walks!**

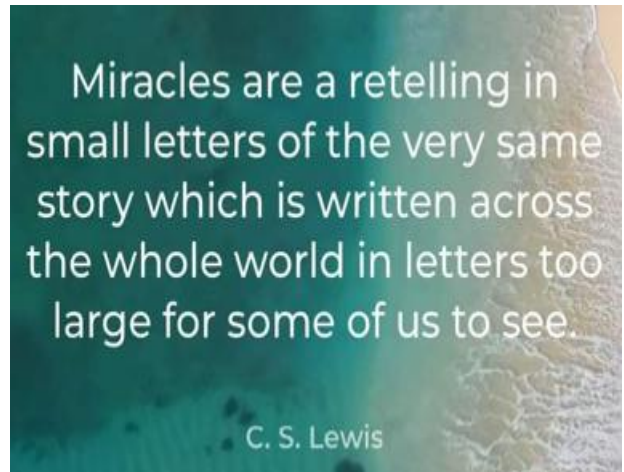
Disciples Crossing Camp in Athens
Men's Walk #112, Mar 5 – 8
Women's Walk #113, Mar 12 – 17

- **Sponsor a Pilgrim!** Do you know someone you would like to share this amazing experience with? Prayerfully consider asking them to attend a walk. Pilgrim information is found on our website www.GRACEEmmaus.com -> Applications tab -> Pilgrim Application.

- **Start making agape gifts for men and women!** Recommended number of identical pieces of agape for each Walk (you can add the name of your Reunion Group and city to the Agape, but please do not put the name of your church):
 - Agape for Everyone – 72
 - Dining Room Agape – 64
 - Bed Agape – 36Feel free to make as many sets as you would like! It's not too early to start! We will also need lanyards for nametags and crosses, and decorated place mats. Contact Betty Buchanan for more information. (jimbet85@gmail.com)

- **Do you have a Golf Cart or Mule we could borrow for one or both Walks?** Contact one of the Walk Lay Directors, Todd Morgan (texantodd23@yahoo.com) or Rhonda Gorrell (fire322dfd@yahoo.com).

- **Attend Candlelight at the Walks:** Saturday, gates open 7:30, worship at 8



- **Attend Closing at the Walks:** Sunday, Sponsors pick up Pilgrim's belongings at 3:30, Closing starts at 4
- **Sign up on the Prayer Vigil posted on the website!**
- **Consider being a server for the Agape Dinner on Saturday evening of each Walk.** Women will serve for the Men's Walk on Saturday evening. Men will serve for the Women's Walk on Saturday evening. Arrive at the camp at 4pm. All you need are black pants, a white shirt, and a willing heart! Contact Betty Buchanan for more information. (jimbet85@gmail.com)
- **Can you help with snacks and drinks for both Walks?** We can use all types of drinks from bottled water to cans and bottles of soft drinks and tea. Cases of bottled water are greatly appreciated! We also need plenty of snack food, and individually wrapped goodies are best.

The Gift

I learned most of my earliest life lessons while fishing with my Daddy. When I became a teenager, nearly every weekend we would head out to the lake for a weekend of fishing, talking, and just getting away from it all. And we did catch a lot of fish! However, regardless of how much fun we were having, we always headed back to town on Saturday evening so that we could be in church the next morning.

As I got older, I still enjoyed fishing, but the times with Daddy got fewer and fewer. I can still remember our last fishing trip like it was yesterday. It was a perfect spring day in 1985, and as nearly always, we caught plenty of fish.

After Daddy died, for some reason I ended up with his old “beat up” tackle box that I remembered from the earliest fishing trips with him. I kept it for a long time, but never used it, just kept it stuck away for safe keeping.

Years later when I had a stepson, I learned that fishing was one way that I could connect with him. We got out when we could, and I tried to teach him some of the life lessons my Daddy had taught me. I got him all the newest and best tackle and he enjoyed every trip, and I might add, he caught a lot of fish, too!

Then one Christmas season I thought that it might be neat to pass Daddy’s old tackle box along to him, so I found it, cleaned it out, polished it, and put it under the tree.



The look on my son’s face as he unwrapped it and heard about its story made that Christmas the best I’ve ever had.

That old, beat-up tackle box was by far the second best gift I’ve ever given anyone, and likewise, giving it was the second best gift I’ve ever received....

The best gift I’ve ever received, of course, is the **one** we can all receive again this year as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ through God’s amazing Grace. How could there be a better gift?

However, just like I did in passing that old tackle box along to someone I loved; it is my joy and responsibility to pass on God’s wonderful gift of Grace to others.

Let’s all remember this Christmas that the best gift is the one that we can pass along...

To quote something I’ve heard somewhere.... our job is to give and give freely, the rest is up to God!

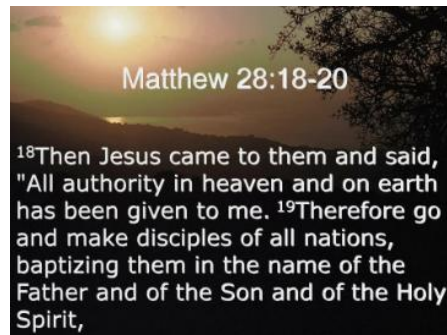
Merry Christmas everyone!
Anonymous Community Member

Men's Walk #112

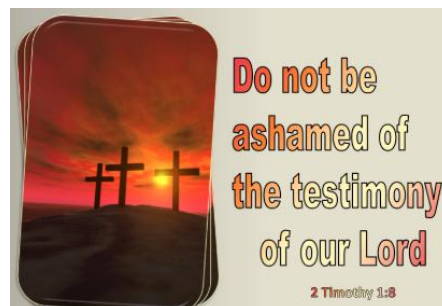
LD Todd Morgan
ALD Kevin Abney
ALD Brian Alredge
ALD Brad Burton
SD Dan Vickers
ASD Scott Catchet
ASD John Epps
ASD Gerry Giles
ASD Joe Hall
BR Brett Walker
AV Bruce Beekman
AV Mike Johnston
MU-L John Crow
MU Blake Burton
MU James Cooley
TL Johnny Bynum
TL Doug Denmark
TL Brian Jones
TL Mike Payne
TL Brad Sustaire
TL Caleb White
ATL David Arguijo
ATL Allen Bridges
ATL Garry Dievendorf
ATL Rich Smith
ATL Colton Hawkins
ATL Danny Stroud
CH-L Larry Roseman
CH David May
CH Joe Rhoades
CH Bob Wade
OT-L Ken Duesterhoft
OT Bill Clem
OT Dallas Cox
OT Micheal Dunn
OT Tabitha Morgan
OT Kurt Penner
OT Joann Sipes
OT Paul Stark
OT Channing Stroud
OT Brandon Turner
OT Martha Walker

The Teams are Ready

Walk #112



Walk #113



Women's Walk #113

LD Rhonda Gorrell
ALD Donna Sustaire
ALD Kim Hart
ALD Sam Luwizhi
SD Jim Pickens
ASD Nicole Duncan
ASD Gerry Giles
ASD Susan Leddy
ASD Dan Vickers
BR Charlene Burton
AV Sandra Grasch
MU-L Lisa Greer
MU Linda Baker
MU Katherine Middleton
TL Wynn Harle
TL Anita Duesterhoft
TL Mary Rhoades
TL Rhydonia Clem
TL Lisa Brewer
TL Kim Brooks
ATL Donna Shomaker
ATL Dody Forrester
ATL Jessica Spradley
ATL Tori Beekman
ATL Alicia Bynum
ATL Jessica Warren
CH-L Pam McAdams
CH Liz Webb
CH JoAnn Sipes
CH Jessica Hawkins
CH Channing Stroud
OT-L Nancy Edwards
OT Debbie Hays
OT Martha Walker
OT Rachel Brohaugh
OT Jana Warren
OT Jayde Hawkins
OT Dianne Mitchell
OT Mickey Mitchell
OT Cam Ray
OT Regina Shafer
OT Danny Stroud
OT Heather Scott
OT Crystal Taylor
OT Kaci Hefner
OT Mike Johnston

We have a Generous Community

If you have been to a G.R.A.C.E. Community monthly Gathering, a collection is taken during the Worship service from those attending the Gathering. Truly joyful givers! The table below has the total for each year from 2017 through November 2025. Also included is an average giving for each month. Notice the figures for 2020 and 2021 which represent the time of COVID. Understandably, the donations for these years were much lower, since we didn't meet until late 2020. However, donations picked back up in 2022.

These donations pay for necessary non-Walk expenses, such as, liability insurance, trailer insurance and State of Texas vehicle registrations (for the music and supply trailers), post office box rental, Group M7 (for computer and internet services), Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI for permission to use songs). Finally, remaining amounts go directly to Walk expenses. Our Community Members have always been faithful!

Account QuickReport			
GRACE Emmaus - Donations Gathering			
January 2017 - November 2025			
Donations Gatherings		Total Giving for Year	Monthly Average
	2017	\$4,165.41	\$347.12
	2018	\$5,309.00	\$442.42
	2019	\$6,798.00	\$566.50
	COVID 2020	\$2,372.00	\$197.67
	COVID 2021	\$4,113.05	\$342.75
	2022	\$6,493.59	\$541.13
	2023	\$6,401.00	\$533.42
	2024	\$8,037.00	\$669.75
	2025	\$7,572.00	\$631.00
Total for Donations Gatherings - 2017 through 2025		\$51,261.05	

As I leave the Treasurer's position on the Community Board at the end of 2025, I want to express my thanks to the Community for permitting me to serve for two different terms. Being a "number cruncher", it has been fun and rewarding. Also, it has been a true blessing to witness the generosity of our Community.

DeColores!

Betty Buchanan, Community Treasurer

Jesus justified me before God
Emanipated my heart
Saved me from Sin
Untangled my self-esteem
Spoke life over me
Clensed me of shame
Healed my wounds
Redeemed my life
Inspired me to Love others
Smoothed my rough edges
Took my place on the cross

Noel by J.R.R. Tolkien

*This piece of poetry was written in 1936,
and it was not discovered until 2013.*

Grim was the world and grey last night:
The moon and stars were fled,
The hall was dark without song or light,
The fires were fallen dead.
The wind in the trees was like to the sea,
And over the mountains' teeth
It whistled bitter-cold and free,
As a sword leapt from its sheath.

The lord of snows upreared his head;
His mantle long and pale
Upon the bitter blast was spread
And hung o'er hill and dale.
The world was blind,
the boughs were bent,
All ways and paths were wild:
Then the veil of cloud apart was rent,
And here was born a Child.

The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.



The ancient dome of heaven sheer
Was pricked with distant light;
A star came shining white and clear
Alone above the night.

In the dale of dark in that hour of birth
One voice on a sudden sang:
Then all the bells in Heaven and Earth
Together at midnight rang.

Mary sang in this world below:
They heard her song arise
O'er mist and over mountain snow
To the walls of Paradise,
And the tongue of many bells was stirred
in Heaven's towers to ring
When the voice of mortal maid was heard,
That was mother of Heaven's King.

Glad is the world and fair this night
With stars about its head,
And the hall is filled with laughter and light,
And fires are burning red.
The bells of Paradise now ring
With bells of Christendom,
And Gloria, Gloria we will sing
That God on earth is come.

Imperfect People... Perfect Savior

Somehow, it's already December again. It seems like our walks were just a couple of weeks ago. Now I'm trying to find the Christmas lights I swore I put away neatly last year, only to find a tangled ball that looks like it's been through spiritual warfare.

It's the season of lists... "honey-do" lists that seem to multiply faster than loaves and fishes. It's easy to get so caught up in doing that we forget to just be. But this time of year, God reminds me that His work in us isn't rushed. He doesn't get stressed about time the way we do. Sometimes I think He uses December to slow us down and remind us of who's really in charge.

My bride and I took time in November to just get away and chase some Fall leaves in Arkansas. Maybe it's during those quiet drives with Christian music playing, or when you finally sit down after a long day and realize how blessed you are, that you are reminded of God's unconditional love and grace.

The story of Christmas isn't about perfect people or perfect plans. It's about a perfect Savior stepping into our imperfect world. And He's still doing that every day. He's still showing up in our chaos, our laughter, and even on our camping trips.

So this month, let's take a breath, enjoy the moment, and remember that God's not done with any of us yet. He's still shaping, still leading, and still calling us to walk in His light and spread His love, one day at a time.

Merry Christmas to all my Emmaus brothers and sisters. May your coffee be hot, your lights work on the first try, your Christmas trees not be tilted, your family be blessed, and your heart stays tuned to the real reason for the season.

De Colores!
Brad Burton
Community Communications



When our hopes bind us to our Hope

But we had hoped . . .

The cancer is back and with a vengeance.

But we had hoped . . .

We lost the baby, and this was the third pregnancy.

But we had hoped . . .

The bank is going to foreclose on the house, and there's no way out.

But we had hoped . . .

Our daughter has a mental illness and is off the rails and not coming back this time.

But we had hoped . . .

Our son is in jail for ten more years of a twenty-year sentence.

But we had hoped . . .

My husband is leaving me for another man.

But we had hoped . . .

My wife is addicted to drugs and alcohol and will not stop lying about it.

But we had hoped . . .

Our son took his own life in the face of a very promising path ahead.

But we had hoped . . .

The bank is not going to carry over our crop loans another year. We're done.

But we had hoped . . .

Our son and his wonderful family are being deported after decades here, and no one can help.

But we had hoped . . .

We lost everything in the fire, and the insurance company is not paying.

But we had hoped . . .

The mild memory loss is turning into full-blown early-onset dementia.

But we had hoped . . .

Another disappointing relationship, and I have still not found my spouse.

But we had hoped . . .

My dream job turned out to be a nightmare, and I have no idea what to do.

But we had hoped . . .

My best friend and right-hand man at the company lost his life in a tragic accident.

But we had hoped . . .

Every single situation named represents a real person who wakes up with us every single morning.

We are all walking together on that road to Emmaus—which is simply the place we are hanging our hat at the end of these hard days—the place we call home.

We prayed and fasted and pleaded and did everything we knew to do. We had hoped God would redeem the situation, but it's not turning out like we had hoped.

Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

The death of hope is the hardest thing. The turning away from a desperately anticipated outcome is horrific. The letting go of a deeply desired future is devastating.

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; (24:15 NIV)

It's what he does, because that's who he is. He comes up and walks along with us. Right here and right now, he is walking along with you. But where? You ask. He has hidden himself in the ones who love him all around you. Could he be writing and speaking these very words?

. . . but they were kept from recognizing him. (24:16 NIV)

Grief can be so destabilizing that it blinds us to everything but loss.

Why is it so hard to see and experience Jesus in these disappointments? Often it's because we so deeply connected our hoped-for outcome to him that we can no longer separate his presence from our hope. This is how our hopes can blind us to our Hope.

Meanwhile, he's walking up on us now. He's ready to enter our conversation. He's ready to hold our broken hopes and heal our broken hearts. He has come to walk us home, back to Emmaus, and into the new thing he is doing and the new day he is dawning—as hard to believe as this may sound. He has come to walk us home.

And, friends, that's what he's doing in and with us as we walk along this long, hard road of life. We are walking each other home.

Let's give our two friends from Emmaus the last word today:

. . . it is now the third day since these things happened.

Yes, it's still the third day. And I am shifting from "we had hoped," to "I now hope in you, Jesus, alone."

Reprinted with permission J.D. Walt
Submitted by Charlene Burton, Community Registrar

GRACE Emmaus Community Board of Directors 2025

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SUPPORT FOR THE GRACE EMMAUS COMMUNITY

The G.R.A.C.E. Emmaus Community wishes to continue to spread the life-changing experience that an Emmaus weekend can deliver. Won't you help us by donating funds for scholarships for both Pilgrims and team members, or the general fund of our community? We are asking you to consider donating \$5, \$10, \$25 monthly or whatever amount you would like to set the donation to. This monthly donation will be debited automatically from your bank account on or about the 15th of the month.

Thank you for your continued support of our Emmaus community.

De Colores

PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW:

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

BANK INFORMATION

I (We) hereby authorize GRACE Emmaus to initiate debit entries to my (our) checking in account indicated below. The amount will be charged monthly. This authority is to remain in full force and effect until GRACE Emmaus receives written notification of its termination.

Monthly gift amount \$ _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Fill out information below or attach voided check.

Depository Name: _____ City: _____

State: ____ Zip: _____

Account #: _____

Transit/ABA #: _____

MAIL INFORMATION TO:

Tyler Emmaus GRACE Community

P.O. Box 132212

Tyler, TX 75713-2212