

The Lamplighter



Monthly Newsletter

April 2026

OUR VISION: To be a multi-generational, multi-cultural community church following Jesus

OUR MISSION: To reach the lost for Jesus Christ - Reaching our one, as God works through us

My recent newsletter articles have focused on a proper definition of grace and how New Testament grace informs our understanding of the Christian gospel, justification by faith, and the fear of the LORD. It might help if we take a closer look at the etymological history of grace, from its Greek origins to modern day.

Centuries before Jesus' ministry or Paul's letters, the word *charis* (χάρις), was associated with Greek mythology. In the pantheon of Greek gods there were several goddesses (perhaps three), collectively named the *Charites* (Χάριτες), who possessed and bestowed charm, splendor, beauty, and joy. And if a person possessed an amazing talent or skill, it was thought to be a gift from the gods. We still might say a ballet dancer is graceful, and the original idea indicated more than the beauty of her moves; it recognized that her ability to so dance was a divine gift or endowment. Consider this example from Homer's *The Odyssey*: "Zeus's daughter Athena made [Odysseus] taller to all eyes, his build more massive now . . . As a master craftsman washes gold over beaten silver . . . so she lavished grace (χάρις) over his head and shoulders." The New Testament employs the word grace (χάρις) in a similar way. For example, after Jesus' birth, Luke 2:40 says, "And the child continued to grow and became strong, increasing in wisdom; and the **grace** of God was upon him." Again, at the beginning of the church Acts 4:33 says, "With great power the apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant **grace** was upon them all."

By the time of the Greek philosopher Plato (c. 350 BC) the Greek word *charis* (χάρις) had also been assigned a more secular meaning. While Homer wrote of the *charis* (χάρις) that the gods give humans, Plato wrote more about the *charis* (χάρις) people give each other. This secular use of *charis* (χάρις) was more focused on the giving of favors. Then, as the Romans incorporated the *Charites* (the Χάριτες) into their own mythology, they attributed to them the Latin name *the Gratiae*. The Latin word *gratia* would have an influence on Christian theology. While the New Testament was written in Greek and the New Testament sense of *charis* is focused on divinely bestowed endowments, the Latin word *gratia* placed greater focus on such concepts as favor and gratitude. When the Bible was translated into Latin, in the 4th century AD, this expanded understanding influenced the interpretation of *charis* (χάρις). Over a millenia later, Luther's German translation of the New Testament employed the German word *gnaden* for the Greek word *charis* (χάρις). But the German word *gnaden* is more about mercy than endowment. Then, when Tyndale published his English translation of the New Testament in 1526, he used the English word *grace*. Since the English language has roots in both Latin and Germanic languages, the meaning of the English word *grace* was influenced by both the Latin word *gratia* and the German word *gnaden*.

In the centuries since, the original meaning of *charis* has taken an increasingly secondary place in our definition of *grace*. When John Newton penned *Amazing Grace*, there was still a vestige of understanding that grace encompassed what Calvin called "the particular grace of the Holy Spirit," which causes the spiritually blind to see and teaches the fear of the LORD, but this older understanding of grace is less common in the 21st century. When we read the word grace in the New Testament it helps to know its history.

Pastor Tom

PRAYERS & PRAISES FOR APRIL 2026

Keep praying for Eloise Kalmar, Mike Henry's Aunt Karen, Amanda Sheely, Gary & Phyllis Eastman, Nikki Eriks' friend Jared, Maleeta's friend Linda, Cisco's uncle, and Johnny Rattray.

Praise God DaVanna Terry's back surgery went well.

Remember these serviceman: Col. Scott Diehl & SSG. Charles Eastman.

Remember our Homebound: Mary Keller, Gretna Szymanski and Don & Arlene Mauger

1 Thessalonians 5:18: "in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."





March 2026

Dear Ross Community Reformed Church,

Tataya is a Massai evangelist in Tanzania. Like many Massai men, he never learned to read because he grew up herding livestock and attended school only occasionally.

This creates a heartbreaking barrier. Even when printed Bibles are available, **many Massai cannot read God's Word—it remains out of reach.**

As Tataya explains, “In this world, it’s better if we have both a printed Bible and a Talking Bible. But where I live, many people cannot read. **The Talking Bible helps them understand.**”

Six months ago, Tataya received a Talking Bible. For the first time, Scripture could be heard clearly in the local language—first at Friday and Sunday gatherings.

But the listening didn’t stop there. People hungered for more. Tataya began sending the Talking Bible home with different believers each week so families could listen longer—even while tending their livestock or working in the fields.

God’s Word was no longer distant or locked away. It could be heard—personal, alive—and people were eager to listen.

Because of the Talking Bible, God’s Word now reaches people in Tataya’s community who cannot read. Families gather at home, neighbors stop to listen, and even elders—who often resist printed Bibles—hear Scripture aloud. One small device is shared again and again, boldly spreading God’s Word throughout the community.

“When Scripture is spoken aloud” Tataya explains, “people can meditate on God’s Word day and night—just as Joshua 1:8 describes.” “I love seeing my people’s faces light up when they hear God’s Word,” he adds. “It reminds me why I keep sharing.”

One **Talking Bible now reaches entire** families—and sparks conversations throughout the community.

The Talking Bible Tataya uses today is part of a legacy that began over 40 years ago. In 1983, I recorded the Massai New Testament in a small mud hut on the Serengeti—a project that took three months! Today, updated recordings continue to bring God’s Word to thousands who cannot read.

Tataya’s story is just one of many. Across Tanzania and beyond, millions of people cannot read—and right now, they are waiting to hear God’s Word. For them, the Talking Bible is not a replacement. It is a lifeline.

Because of your faithful support, God’s Word continues to reach communities like Tataya’s every day. Families gather at home, neighbors stop to listen, and even elders are hearing Scripture aloud. One small device is shared again and again, boldly spreading God’s Word throughout the community.

Respectfully,

Paul D. Hoekstra

President, Talking Bibles International

REMINDERS

April 2

Maundy Thursday 7PM Service

April 3

Good Friday Service 7PM

April 5—Easter

9:30 AM Worship—Pastor Tom

April 12

9:30 AM Worship —Pastor Tom

April 19

9:30 AM Worship—Guest speaker

Mission Fund

April 26

9:30 AM Worship —Pastor Tom

Reminder:

Pastor Tom's vacation April 13-20

Consistory changed to April 21 7PM



YOUR 2026 DEACONS AND ELDERS

Zone 1: Nancy Couwenhoven (D) Monica Eriks (E)
Zone 2: Brian Cummins (D) Kevin Cheeseman (E)
Zone 3: Shelli Cavell (D) Maleeta Yonker (E)
Zone 4: Nikole Eriks (D) Keith Best (E)
Zone 5: Angel Hernandez (D) Jonathan Evans (E)
Zone 6: Sheryl Araujo (D) Carolyn Lohman (E)

APRIL

BIRTHDAYS

2 Carolyn Lohman

5 Janet Best

5 Jaxon Gidley

5 Jessie Rattray

5 Georgette Taylor

10 Betsy Archer

14 Jim Koedyker

14 L. V. McCoy

19 Marilyn Niles

20 Ardy Best

24 Millie Schramm

28 Rob Elizondo

28 Jon Evans

30 Jerome Hendley Sr.

CONSISTORY MEETING for Elders and Deacons
 April 21 7PM

If you would like to request baptism, become a member or make profession of faith in Christ please call the church office at 219-980-0200 or talk with Pastor Tom.

Financial Updates / February 2026

Monthly general fund expenses \$14,806.62

Monthly offerings for February \$10,995.64

General Fund Shortage \$3,810.98

Office Hours Georgette will be in the Office
 Mon. Tues, Wed. & Fri. 9-12.



We are still collecting pop tabs for Ronald McDonald House. Containers are in the Lobby & Down Stairs on the stage.



MENU for APRIL

1 Dino Nuggets

8 Sloppy Joes

15 Hot Dogs

22 Hot Ham / Cheese

29 Pizza



April 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 <p>Happy Easter!</p>		<p>1</p> <p>Dinner 5:50 Awana 6:30</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Food Pantry 11:30-12:00 Maundy Thursday 7PM</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Good Friday Service 7PM</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>5</p> <p>9:30 Worship Pastor Tom</p> <p>Easter</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Crochet Group 1:30-3:30 BSF 6:55</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Dinner 5:50 Awana 6:30</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Food Pantry 11:30-12:00</p>	<p>10</p>
<p>12</p> <p>9:30 Worship Pastor Tom</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Crochet Group 1:30-3:30 BSF 6:55</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Dinner 5:50 Awana 6:30</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Food Pantry 11:30-12:00</p>	<p>18</p>
<p>19</p> <p>9:30 Worship Guest Speaker Mission Sunday</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Crochet Group 1:30-3:30 BSF 6:55 Consistory 7PM</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Dinner 5:50 Awana 6:30</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Food Pantry 11:30-12:00</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>26</p> <p>9:30 Worship Pastor Tom</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Crochet Group 1:30-3:30 BSF 6:55</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Dinner 5:50 Awana 6:30 Awards Night</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Food Pantry 11:30-12:00</p>	<p>Kingdom Network Global Gathering April 22-24</p> <p>Pastor Tom's Vacation Apr. 13-20</p>



Family Game Show Night

March 11, 2026

Everyone had so much fun showcasing their game show skills. Special thanks to Jenny & Angel for all their hard work to ensure we have the best Family Game Show Night year after year!

