



October 7, 2020

Grace To You



Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers.

- *1 Thessalonians 1:1-2*

These are the oldest words written in the New Testament scriptures: the first words of a letter written by Paul, with Silvanus and Timothy, and addressed to the church of the Thessalonians with a message of grace, peace, and thanksgiving with prayer.

When we study the New Testament, we often skip over these salutations and get right into the theological issues that the writings address. In doing so, we can almost lose sight of the reality that the New Testament is primarily composed of letters that were sent because the people could not be together in person.

There is a whole history of the first Christians gathering together in homes, sometimes in secret, and, later on, uniting openly in churches. But the records that we have in the Bible come from the times when they were apart. Where would we be today without the letters of the New Testament?

I hope that we will keep finding ways to reach out and be connected to one another with messages of grace and peace when we can't be together in person. We've been learning and adapting these past months. Have you seen the noon prayers? Every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, right at noon, Rev. Holloway, Rev. Swahnberg, or I sit down in front of a camera and share about ten minutes of prayer and reflection. This video is live on the church's facebook page. Or, if you don't use facebook, you can [view these recordings](#) on the church website. Anne Marie's messages are creative and encouraging, and Judy has recently lifted up the stories of people whose lives have made a difference.

Every Sunday worship service is available to [view on the church website](#). You can join at any day or time in the hymns, prayers, and the joy of watching over John Finney's shoulder as his hands and feet work wonders on the pipe organ.

In the Christian faith, there is a long history of God's love expressed in community when we are together and when we are apart. And so we say again to you: "Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers."

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister