

February  
2026

GRACE NOTES  
ENCOURAGEMENT  
FOR LIFE  
TOGETHER AT  
GRACE UMC



PASTOR'S  
NOTE



LAY LEADER'S  
MESSAGE



MINISTRY  
MATTERS

# GRACE NOTES

## Geography

by Pastor Lee

When I first began studying the Bible with you, the first thing I introduced was the geography of Israel. Why geography among so many other things? Because understanding the geography of Israel makes understanding the Bible much easier. Israel is a very small country. It's even smaller than our state. From Eilat, Israel's southernmost city, a five-hour drive north takes you from the desolate Negev Desert, past the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley, to the lush Sea of Galilee. This small area exhibits remarkable geographical diversity. This is due to Israel's unique topography and elevation differences.

Israel is very short from east to west, about 60 miles, but very long from north to south, about 300 miles. A cross-section of Israel, centered on Jerusalem and running east to west, dramatically illustrates these elevation differences. From Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast, a one-hour drive east takes you to Jerusalem, located at an elevation of 2,500 feet above sea level. However, just 30 minutes further east from Jerusalem lies Jericho, the lowest point on earth at -1,500 feet below sea level. A little further southeast is the Dead Sea, at -1,300 feet below sea level. This dramatic change in elevation from west to east is reflected in the diverse landscapes running from north to south. Israel can be divided into four main geographical regions: the western coastal plain, the western mountain range, the central rift valley, and the eastern mountain range.



The geographical structure of Israel, characterized by its narrow east-west width and dramatic elevation changes, along with the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Arabian Desert to the south, are the two crucial factors determining Israel's weather. That's why when discussing Israel's weather, it's often described as "the battle between the Sea and the Desert." Cool, rainy winds always blow from the west, while hot, dry winds come from the Arabian Desert. I preached on Luke 12 last time, which says, "When you see a cloud rising from the west, immediately you say, 'It's going to rain,' and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, 'It's going to be hot,' and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?"

The first obstacle the Israelites faced after escaping from Egypt was the Red Sea. At that time, God saved the Israelites by parting the Red Sea, and the passage describing the parting of the Red Sea also contains a reference to

Israel's climate. Exodus 14:21, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided." In Israel, the east wind is a dry wind that quickly dries everything, while the west wind is a humid wind that brings rain.

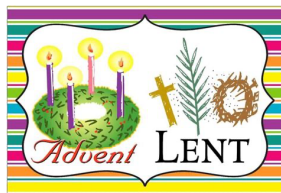
The rain clouds carried by the prevailing westerly winds from the Mediterranean Sea bring abundant rain to the western coastal plain, but they do not cross the western mountainous region, which is 2,000-3,000 feet above sea level where Jerusalem is located, and gradually dissipate as they move eastward. Due to this difference in geographical altitude, the prevailing westerly winds and rain clouds, and the hot winds blowing from the south, the natural environment to the east and west of Jerusalem shows a dramatic difference. This is a significant reason why the Judean wilderness (or desert) is formed to the east of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Shalom!

## Winter of Waiting & Preparation

by Lay Leader, Laurie Bedard

It is a very sparkly white looking world outside my windows this morning! Much more snow than we've seen in a few years. It certainly looks and feels like winter. I think bears have a really good idea about winter, find a warm cozy cave and snooze until spring air wakes you up! Wouldn't it be kind of nice to emerge into warm weather totally rested and shorts-slim ready for summer?

Silly image I know but it makes me think that the deeply cold days of winter can offer time to reboot our bodies, minds and spirits. I'm not a skier anymore but I know that all this new snow is an exciting gift for those who love the slopes and the trails. Fresh crisp air and how blue the skies can look against the white canvas are certainly uplifting and invigorating. I might not be out snowshoeing these days but I do appreciate the way taking a deep cleansing breath of winter



air can make me feel. God is so amazing and so evident in His creation even when we are dealing with feet of the "white stuff."

It's hard to believe that we are more than a month past our Advent season and less than three weeks away from the beginning of Lent. Winter is a time of waiting, as we do before Christmas, and also a time of preparation as it leads to Lent. No season from the Lord is wasted and each one is lovely in its

own way. I know I'm writing this from a confirmed New Englander's perspective. I love the different seasons and what each one offers. They remind me of God's creativity and His sovereignty.

I hope and pray that you can find the beauty in these very wintry days, either immersed in snowy activities or cozy and warm inside, look for God's hand. Seek ways to thank Him and worship Him. His blessings are abundant. Bundle up!

### "We only have five loaves of bread and two fish." —Luke 9:13

"We have only ..." Little did the disciples know what Jesus would do with only five loaves and two fish. The Bible tells us that everyone in the crowd ate—and there were twelve basketfuls of leftovers. And the men alone numbered five thousand.

Perhaps when you give to your church or some other ministry, your thinking is like that of the disciples: "I can give only. ..." But let me challenge you to do just that! Give what you can give—and give in faith.

After all, Jesus had only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, but in His hands God multiplied it, and it became a huge feast for the crowd. In the same way God is able to take even a very small amount of money and use it to accomplish His purposes—if we dedicate it to Him.

Jesus gave everything for your salvation, even His life. Have you given everything back to Him in return—including your finances? Make it your goal to serve Christ in every way you can, including with your money. *[from Billy Graham's Wisdom for Each Day devotion 1/24/26]*

# Ministry Matters

## COMMUNITY LUNCH MINISTRY IN NEED OF WARM WINTER ITEMS

The Community Lunch program is now accepting clothing, outer wear, and blankets (in decent shape and freshly cleaned) to give to those we serve. Please contact Lisa Wood at 802-473-0381 or lisavitkowood@gmail.com.



### TRUSTEES' CORNER

Updates: After a long battle with the boilers, we believe the contractor came up with a fix and they are now all working together! You may be able to tell because the Sunday morning service has been very comfortable.

We have been working with Spectrum on phone bills for church and parsonage. We were able to save 50% for church and 40% at parsonage.

Coming soon: We will be working on the floors for the kitchen and fellowship hall. Also looking into removing some snow piles from church driveway.

Serving   
from the  
Heart

Join our AGG  
(A Grace-ful Group)  
on Facebook!



## THANK YOU!

Thank you to our Liturgists, Fellowship Hosts, Communion Stewards, Musical Talent, Sunday School Teachers, Audio-Video Techs, Ushers, and Greeters for your valuable service for Sunday morning worship.

### "Souper Bowl" Fellowship Hour

Please join us after service on Super Bowl Sunday, February 8th, for a special "Souper Bowl" Fellowship Hour! Wear your favorite team's shirt or colors to celebrate! Soup and sandwiches will be served and a box will be available for soup donations to the Community Lunch or Food Shelf. If you'd like to contribute or help with food, that would be welcomed.

Soup's on!



### WEEKLY MINISTRIES

Monday: Community Lunch  
11:00am -12:15pm

Thursday: Prayer & Share at the  
Bedards' 7:30am

Saturday: Bible Study with  
Pastor Lee  
10:00-11:20am

### MONTHLY MINISTRIES

1st Sunday: Holy Communion  
& Fellowship Hour

3rd Sunday: Women's Fellowship  
for Spiritual Renewal  
after service

# LOVE IS... WORD SEARCH

Look for the **red** words from the verse listed below.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | I | W | Y | W | T | W | U | Y | V | A | U | W | S | B | Y | R |
| B | R | E | J | O | I | C | E | S | H | N | K | X | J | O | R | Z |
| T | Q | J | H | O | P | E | S | T | M | I | V | T | L | A | E | T |
| C | R | V | Z | D | D | L | U | W | N | H | T | N | S | S | S | P |
| K | F | A | I | U | G | R | Y | S | Z | A | E | E | E | T | E | O |
| M | T | Q | L | G | T | C | I | O | M | V | L | I | V | G | N | Z |
| T | Q | B | I | V | C | S | Y | G | O | W | U | T | E | D | T | Z |
| N | E | V | E | R | T | Y | N | L | Q | I | S | A | I | I | F | U |
| Y | J | Q | T | U | S | E | R | U | D | N | E | P | L | D | U | V |
| K | W | J | N | E | S | J | M | F | Y | B | A | V | E | F | L | X |
| L | A | W | W | P | Y | F | B | C | R | B | L | J | B | P | B | S |
| Z | O | I | V | Q | U | S | R | A | E | B | Y | C | A | B | G | W |
| C | R | H | G | C | O | R | I | N | T | H | I | A | N | S | P | D |
| I | T | Y | Z | X | H | Z | A | O | R | O | E | E | I | L | S | N |
| H | R | L | C | M | N | O | W | J | T | Q | N | H | T | M | D | I |
| K | V | R | I | Z | Y | X | T | Y | N | S | V | E | R | R | N | K |
| E | V | N | A | Y | Q | T | K | E | D | P | Y | O | Y | B | E | U |

Love is **patient** and **kind**; love does not **envy** or **boast**; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not **insist** on its own way; it is not irritable or **resentful**; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but **rejoices** with the truth. Love **bears** all things, **believes** all things, **hopes** all things, **endures** all things. Love **never ends**.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

# February 2026

- Pastor's Schedule
- Anniversaries
- Birthdays
- Church Happenings

| Sunday   | Monday   | Tuesday                              | Wednesday   | Thursday                                     | Friday             | Saturday                   |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1<br>10:30 AM Sunday Worship   | 2<br>Alexia Grant<br>11:00 AM Community Luncheon                     | 3                                    | 4<br>Pam Franchek                                 | 5<br>7:00 AM Prayer & Share                  | 6                  | 7<br>10:00 AM Bible Study  |
| 8<br>Clay Bailey<br>10:30 AM Sunday Worship<br>11:30 AM "Souper Bowl" Sunday       | 9<br>11:00 AM Community Luncheon                                     | 10<br>Jocelyn Geiger<br>Will Merrill | 11  | 12<br>Peter Bedard<br>7:00 AM Prayer & Share | 13<br>Shawn Gingue | 14<br>10:00 AM Bible Study |
| 15<br>10:30 AM Sunday Worship<br>11:30 AM Women's Fellowship for Spiritual Renewal | 16<br>Cynthia Gordon<br>11:00 AM Community Luncheon                  | 17                                   | 18<br>Donna Reed<br>7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service | 19<br>7:00 AM Prayer & Share                 | 20                 | 21<br>10:00 AM Bible Study |
| 22<br>Kim Cota<br>10:30 AM Sunday Worship  | 23<br>Joan Wollrath<br>Carlyle Pierce<br>11:00 AM Community Luncheon | 24                                   | 25  | 26<br>7:00 AM Prayer & Share                 | 27                 | 28<br>10:00 AM Bible Study |



*Grace*

United Methodist Church  
36 Central Street  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
[www.stjgracechurch.org](http://www.stjgracechurch.org)

Join us for Worship – Sundays at 10:30 am

Worship  
with us