



October/
November/
December 2021

S.W.A.G.

Saved With Amazing Grace

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

Written by Shirley Jones

We are proud to present the first issue of S.W.A.G., Saved With Amazing Grace, and we hope you find it provocative and informative.

S.W.A.G. blends elements of BHP culture, our young people while looking at the world around us. We will begin by publishing four times a year and will include features on societal change, issues facing young people with a focus on children of color, and a further dive into Christianity.

The goal is to bring us closer together as we face the vicissitudes of life and navigate the world through our spiritual lenses. As the holiday season brings on a state of stress, its been discovered in research that stress causes the body to produce an excess of stress cortisol. Anything we can do to reduce anxiety and stress is going to be good. The good news of the Lord brought to you in a pamphlet written by our members is one technique that could reduce stress.

Stress reduction and self-care will be a focus of future issues. It could be yoga, exercise, paying attention to a sensible diet, or meditation. There are masses of these programs that are

available online and easy to download and get—we will provide those in the newsletter. Additionally, focuses on major shifts taking place around the world, new electronics, music, movies, food, and recipes are all topics that will be discussed.

As we still deal with the pandemic lockdown and stuck inside our homes and we're used to seeing lots of friends, this isolation is going to continue to be difficult. The other thing from a psychological point of view that's quite important is that all of us like to have something to plan and look forward to, and a lot of that is

being curtailed enormously. Help drawing up a little plan of achievable, fun things to do is important, along with food—how will we cope? Aren't we lucky that we live in an age where social media allows us to connect a little more? The newsletter and other activities will be available through email and our website.

In this Holiday issue, we analyze the season after a loved one has gone on to glory; we look at school and graduating during the pandemic through the life of one of BHP's rising stars. Content will be relevant across the church's age group and accessible to the greater community.



Rev. Richard F. Norris, II
Pastor Bethel-Hosanna Church, Pennsauken, NJ

Who would have thought that we'd be here again, especially so soon? For the second year in a row, we find ourselves approaching the Thanksgiving and Advent season,

still amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March of 2020, our lives have been profoundly impacted and irreversibly changed both individually and collectively. For the past 19 months, we have been forced to change the way we live, work, play and worship. We've had to adapt, adopt, and adjust our lives, our traditions, our habits and our policies and procedures in this new reality of COVID-19. But, during this time of change and adaptation, we must remain resolute and unwavering in our execution of the Jesus' Great Commission, to spread the Gospel everywhere we go and to make a positive impact in our families and communities.

What started as an attempt to get "back to normal" has been replaced by a quest to discover "the new normal."

As we approach the 2021 Holiday Season of Thanksgiving and Advent, we must stay focused on our purpose, be clear about what (and why) we are celebrating and commemorating and not so much on how we do it. This season has not lost its purpose or power, even during this trying, and tiring, time. Though we still fight COVID-19, we must give thanks to God

for continuing to bless us, even during this pandemic. Despite the loss of friends, family and loved ones due to, and during the pandemic, we should continue looking forward to celebrating the greatest gift from God to humankind, His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ.

This holiday season, like every other before it, and before COVID-19, is a season that should be filled with hope and expectation. A hope and expectation that is not unlike a family preparing for the birth of a new baby. Our hope is similar, but no less important or significant. Our hope is for a brighter future. Our expectation is of a new and better reality, both individually and collectively.

As we look to the future, we should do so with anticipation for how God will continue to use us in new and different ways to build His kingdom here on earth.

We must continue to seek God's face, even when we find ourselves "in the valley of the shadow of death." We must keep listening for God's voice, even as the background noise of life continues to blare in our ears. We must follow the path that God has for our lives in His divine will.

Let's give thanks as 2021 comes to a close knowing that this year might not have been all we thought it should have been, but it also wasn't as bad as it could have been!

***"Rejoice in the Lord always:
again I say, rejoice."
Phil. 4:4 (KJV)***



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Not What I Expected But It's What I Got

My Way to College Graduation During the Pandemic



Written by Janelle Moore

When I decided to go to college in Pittsburgh, I would have never thought that I would have had to finish out my senior year from my couch in Pennsauken. It was a week after spring break when we heard the news that the university would be switching to all online courses for the remainder of the 2020 Spring Semester. There weren't too many answers to the multitude of questions I had so I had no idea what I was going to do at the time. I had just found an apartment in Pittsburgh, had references for 3 different jobs in the city, and was preparing to have my family come to Pittsburgh for my graduation. We eventually got the news about 2 weeks later that all students had to move out of university housing with some exceptions.

I was one of the exceptions. I decided to stay in Pittsburgh for a few extra weeks to figure out a plan and to work because I was unsure if I would have a job no matter where I went. I spent those few extra weeks just thinking how so much had changed already and how things would continue to change due to the pandemic. I celebrated my 22nd birthday at the beginning of the shut-down. Would I have to celebrate my 23rd during a shut-down as well? Summer was in a few months and then it would be Thanksgiving and Christmas before I knew it. What would the holidays look like? I thought a lot, maybe too much, about what I was going to do about a job and my living situation.

At the end of the day, I decided to move home to be close to my family because at the time I had no clue what was going to happen. I made two back to back trips between

Pittsburgh and Pennsauken to move all of my stuff home by myself which totaled 1,240 miles. I was a bit sad to have to move home but I was happy to know that I could face the uncertainty I was feeling from the comfort of home with my family around. In the end, I was able to finish my undergraduate degree cum laude with two majors and a minor. Seven months after graduation I got a job in higher education like I hoped to get assistance with getting a master's degree.

This pandemic has not been kind but I am so grateful for the success, joy and love I was able to find amongst the chaos. It was going to be hard enough to get a job out of college and the pandemic did not make it easier but I was able to find a job. Moving home allowed me to live closer to my family than I had in the past 4 years. I got to and continue to receive so much support from my family that I could be physically present to see and feel. Even with the quick changes to the learning environment, my professors and advisors were still so supportive and continue to be even though I am no longer in Pittsburgh.

I wish that my final moments in college were spent attending the many graduation events my school put together with my friends, exploring all the things in Pittsburgh I hadn't seen already like I had planned, and having my family all in town for Graduation. I remind myself that everything happens for a reason and of how grateful I am to have had the experiences I did have in college. I have my Bachelor's checked off on my goals list and my Master's will be checked off in the near future (hopefully Covid has died down enough by then).

Written by Claire Garner

This holiday season, take some time for gratitude. If you think you don't have time because of all you need to do, consider the research. People who practice gratitude have an improved attitude, have improved physical and psychological health, feel more positive, are able to handle challenges more effectively, and are more likely to have lifelong happiness. When you face life's challenges with gratitude, they become less overwhelming and more manageable, creating a sense of well-being.

Even taking one minute to be mindfully grateful each day, especially first thing in the morning, can have a positive impact on your well-being and state of mind!

Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

1. Find something that makes you happy.
2. Find something to give someone to make them smile.
3. Find one thing that you love to smell.
4. Find one thing that you enjoy looking at.
5. Find something that is your favorite color.
6. Find something that you are thankful for in nature.
7. Find something you can use to make a gift for someone.
8. Find something that is useful for you.





Missing Loved Ones During the Holiday Season

How to Cope

Written by Rosalind Brown

Christmas just ain't Christmas without the one you love. New Year's just ain't New Year's without the one you love.

When you've lost someone important in your life, Christmas may be forever changed. The holiday season may not be easy... but you will get through it. Over time, the holidays will adjust to a new normal.

Six years ago, I experienced the unimaginable. I say unimaginable, not so much in that it happened, but it was the timing of events that were unimaginable. Six years ago I buried my Father in November and less than a month later in December, I buried my Mother. I know it was only because of my strong faith in God, that I was able to get through each day. My Mom was my rock, my voice of reason to whom I looked for guidance and I was Daddy's little girl who could do no wrong. Now all I had was an awkward silence; an irreplaceable void that could never be filled.

It took a while for me to come around. It felt like someone had pulled the needle from the center of my chest. But I know God makes no mistakes, and I knew that if I just trust in his plan, I would make it through.

**“When we love deeply,
we mourn deeply;
extraordinary grief is
an expression of
extraordinary love.
Grief and love mirror
each other;
one is not possible
without the other.”**

*Joanne Cacciatore
Bearing the Unbearable*

Know that whatever you're experiencing this holiday season, whether it's anger, sadness, joy, relief, or a combination of feelings, it is totally normal and to be expected. Know that it's completely normal for life to feel like it's been flipped upside down and that everything around you is happening in a blur. Whether you're going through the first Christmas after the death of a loved one, or it's been 30 years, Christmas Day without a loved one never gets easier and holidays without the ones you love is usually an emotionally challenging time. I've read that for many people, the second holiday



is much harder because the first holidays were a blur, people cut themselves a break during the first holidays, other people gave them a pass during the first holidays, or people expected to be in a better place the second year. In essence, the second year becomes much more “real.”

We all often have fond memories with loved ones around the holidays, and when our loved ones are no longer there to reminisce in those memories and create new ones together, our hearts can grow heavy. We begin to operate from a standpoint of loss. We focus on what we no longer have and the person we miss. In these moments, we should acknowledge what we've lost and then take a moment to remember what we do still have around us.

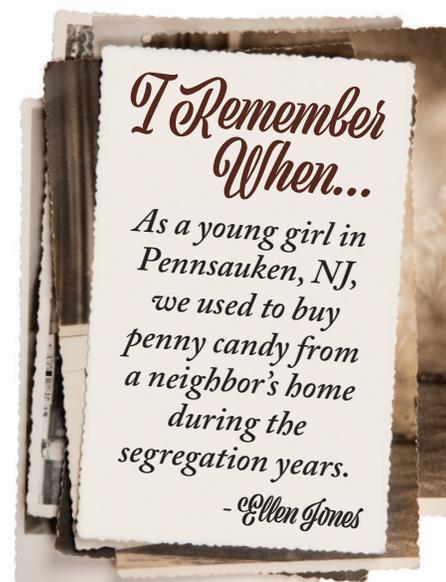
Going into the holidays, it's easy to assume that everything will continue as it always did. The shopping, cooking, wrapping, hosting, and party-going is a necessity. When grieving, it's important to let go of expectations of the could-haves and should-haves that accompany continuing with the regular holiday traditions. Friends and family don't always know what to say or do when we are grieving, especially since everyone handles grief differently. The more you share with your loved ones, the more supportive they can be for you. And, if you're running into unsupportive family or friends, remember it's okay to walk away from them to put your needs first.

There is no set schedule for grief and everyone's experience will be different. Pause and listen to what you need this Christmas and take time for yourself to feel whatever it is you're feeling. As the years go on, you may need less time to yourself to process everything that's going on. Allow yourself as much time as needed to sit in whatever you're feeling.

When someone you love passes away, you may feel like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. While there will always be a void from the loss of your loved one, there are many things you can do to remember, honor, and become connected to their life during Christmas. Even if you change nothing throughout your past traditions, sometimes just thinking about your loved one while everything continues as usual will help you connect to them and their memories.

You will get through it. God said in his word, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Believe it!

The holiday season can be particularly intense, but you are not alone. Grieving is not about getting over it. It is about learning how to live with it and doing what you can to honor their life and the impact they made on you.





How an Enslaved African Man in Boston Helped Save Generations from Smallpox

Written by Shirley Braver

At the time, Smallpox had made it to Boston and was spreading rapidly. The first victims, passengers on a ship from the Caribbean, were shut up in a house identified only by a red flag that read “God have mercy on this house.” Meanwhile, hundreds of residents of the bustling colonial town had started to flee for their lives, terrified of what might happen if they exposed themselves to the frequently deadly disease. Smallpox was one of the era’s deadliest afflictions. “Few diseases at this time were as universal or fatal,” notes historian Susan Pryor. The colonists saw its effects not just among their own countrymen, but among the Native Americans to whom they introduced the disease. Smallpox destroyed Native communities that, with no immunity, were unable to fight off the virus.

As sickness swept through the city, killing hundreds in a time before modern medical treatment or a robust understanding of infectious disease, an enslaved man known only as Onesimus, named after an enslaved man in the Bible whose name meant “useful,” suggested a potential way to keep people from getting sick. Intrigued by Onesimus’ idea, a brave doctor and an outspoken minister undertook a bold experiment to try to stop smallpox in its tracks.

Sadly, Onesimus, was not trusted by his slave owner, Cotton Mather, a minister, who looked down on what he called the “Devilish rites” of Africans and worried that enslaved people might openly rebel. Further, Mather wrote about having to watch him carefully due to what he thought was “thievish” behavior, and recorded in his diary that he was “wicked” and “useless.” But in 1716, Onesimus told him something he did believe: That he knew how to prevent smallpox.

Onesimus, who “is a pretty intelligent fellow,” Mather wrote, told him he had had smallpox—and then hadn’t. Onesimus said that he “had undergone an operation, which had given him something of the smallpox and would forever preserve him from it...and whoever had the courage to use it was forever free of the fear of contagion.”

The operation, Onesimus referred to, consisted of rubbing pus from an infected person into an open wound on the arm. This was done in a controlled manner and under the supervision of a physician so the symptoms would be milder but still confer immunity. Once the infected material was introduced into the body, the person who underwent the procedure was inoculated against smallpox. It wasn’t a vaccination, which involves exposure

to a less dangerous virus to provoke immunity, but it did activate the recipient’s immune response and protected against the disease most of the time.

Mather was fascinated. He verified Onesimus’ story with that of other enslaved people, and learned that the practice had been used in Turkey and China. He became an evangelist for inoculation—also known as variolation—and spread the word throughout Massachusetts and elsewhere in the hopes it would help prevent smallpox.

But Mather hadn’t bargained on how unpopular the idea would be. The same prejudices that caused him to distrust his servant made other white colonists reluctant to undergo a medical procedure developed by or for Black people. Mather “was vilified,” historian Ted Widmer note. “A local newspaper, called The New England Courant, ridiculed him. An explosive device was thrown through his windows with an angry note. There was an ugly racial element to the anger.” Religion also contributed: Other preachers argued that it was against God’s will to expose his creatures to dangerous diseases.

But in 1721, Mather and Zabdiel Boylston, the only physician in Boston who supported the technique, got their chance to test the power of inoculation. That year, a smallpox epidemic spread from a ship to more of the population of Boston, sickening about half of the city’s residents. Boylston sprang into action, inoculating his son and his enslaved workers against the disease. Then, he began inoculating other Bostonians. Of the 242 people he inoculated, only six died—one in 40, as opposed to one in seven deaths among the population of Boston who didn’t undergo the procedure.

The smallpox epidemic wiped out 844 people in Boston, over 14 percent of the population. But it had yielded hope for future epidemics. It also helped set the stage for vaccination.

Later in life Onesimus partially purchased his freedom. Although he never received credit, it is clear that the knowledge he passed on saved hundreds of lives—and led to the eventual eradication of smallpox. In 1980, the World Health Organization declared smallpox entirely eradicated due to the spread of immunization worldwide. It remains the only infectious disease to have been entirely wiped out.



Photo of Onesimus

Game Corner

WORD SEARCH

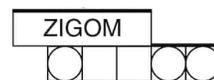
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RELIGIONS

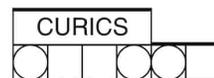
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DAOISM	METHODISM	QUAKERISM
REFORMATION	PAGANISM	

Word Jumble

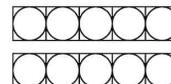
Unscramble these words, 1 letter to each square. Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer.



When it came to making things disappear the illusionist had the _____.



Answer Here



Solve the Equation

$$3x + 5 - 5 = 20 - 5$$

$$x = \underline{\quad}$$



HAPPY HOLIDAYS