

Surprised
by
Grace

*(The work of God in purifying, maturing,
and elevating the soul or spirit.)*



Rideau Park United Church
Summer Project 2005

We often walk through our days in a *daze*. Our habits are so ingrained that we don't even notice where our feet or minds are taking us. There are great simple moments in our world. Ordinary moments transformed by extraordinary viewing. Instead of keeping your eyes on the ground, we invite you to look more carefully to see beauty which otherwise would go unseen.

“How do we do this?” you ask. We have a few suggestions to help you along:

- Say a prayer something like this: God, I confess that sometimes I see things from a viewpoint of despair or disinterest. I think that causes me to miss seeing you around me. Please open my eyes and soften my willing heart to see in a new way. I offer my viewing to be transformed by you.

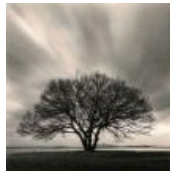
- When something catches your eye, a shimmering light, a bird, a cloud, a flower, (just about anything), look deeper and think about where it came from. Look with a sense of wonder. Even rain water has had an amazing journey before it lands on you. Think about where it may have been. You may experience an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

- Look deeply into the eyes of a loved one. What is there? Pain, joy, love, grief? Communicate your concern and care in a loving manner. In what way does that moment change how you feel about the other person?

- *Pets are a way to see God's grace. Their capriciousness, freedom, joy, independence and secure sense of self can be a healing example to us.*
- *Look at a tree, and in the looking, see the tree at rest, in bud, in leaf, in colour. If the leaves did not fall, what would that do to the balance of nature?*

Some examples of grace:

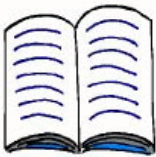
You go to a mall alone, sit down and have lunch. A woman asks if she can join you. You say "of course." You consider, pause, and put your book down, deciding to ask a few questions. The conversation takes a turn to a communication of sharing and mutual understanding. You go from there blessed by the grace of God through communion.



You are on holiday with a friend. There is a road off to the right of the highway. "Something" causes you to feel you should follow it. You do. It leads to the ocean. You park and get out of your car. You follow a walking path over a hill and to a smooth series of rocks being crashed on by ocean waves. Looking far out into the ocean you see icebergs. The beauty of the blue ice in the icebergs is a vision you have never before seen. You look at your friend and you both realize with awe that you are being blessed by the grace of God.

Your child is struggling. Final exams are coming and projects are due. You are phoned by a frantic child. "I can't concentrate. I can't do it. My mind won't work. I'll never get it done before Monday." Tears. Despair. You voice reassurance. You phone your prayer circle. And people pray for the child. The child is blessed by the prayers and succeeds in finishing the daunting assignment, doing better than even they could have imagined. God's grace in the moment.

It's a warm spring day. You get the dog's leash. He bounds to you in joy and you are dragged behind him all the way to the field. The ditches in the field are full of water. You let the dog go. He bounces and runs in and out of the ditches, a spray of water splashing behind him. He charges in and out of the bushes and then comes up to you with his tongue hanging out, and gives a total body shake. You have been blessed by seeing your dog experience his life in connection with creation. God has graced you yet again.



We invite you
to look
for God's grace
in the moments
of your life.



Write them, photograph them.

We've provided notebooks for you in this adventure. Take your favourite pen to paper and document God's grace as you find it.

It may be hard at first, but all you really have to do is to ask God to help you see in a new way. And, if you believe that God will teach you, you will begin to notice amazing things that before went unnoticed.

Take the book with you this summer. Pray. See differently. Watch for the grace of God. God speaks in simple ways for thankful people to hear.

This is an invitation for children, adults or families to discover God's grace.

Around Thanksgiving time we'll get together to share our findings in conversation over brunch. Won't you join us?