



Original artwork by S.O.A.R students made during SeaTurtleastic Reading Academy

## SUMMER 2020

Dear Ministry Partners,

**Day 444.** The nation let out a collective sigh in 1981 as sixty American hostages were finally freed and alive. The Iran Hostage Crisis that began in 1979 was finally over. I remember each night watching the network news and the very first thing each anchor would say was today is Day \_\_\_\_\_ (whatever 'hostage day' it was).

It didn't matter if you watched ABC, CBS or NBC (yes, only 3 stations at the time) each began the same way. The number was front and center on the screen.

There was constant media coverage of the hostage crisis. We were constantly reminded about it. I remember thinking when will this be over. The nation was experiencing fatigue, worry and anxiety over the crisis not to mention questions and doubt for those handling the situation. It appeared that there was no end in sight. But it did end and sixty American hostages were freed and alive. Fast forward 39 years.

**Day 136.** At the end of July, this is how many days Grace Mission (like many businesses and not-for-profits) has been closed to the public. Today, with the plethora of news stations we are reminded over and over again about the pandemic. Numbers are flashed across the screens and news anchors often are repeating what their predecessors did back in the late 70's. There is no shortage of bad news. Although this isn't the Iran Hostage Crisis it often feels like we are being held 'hostage' by a deadly virus. I think we are all feeling fatigue, worry and anxiety. It feels like there is no end in sight but much like the Iran Hostage Crisis there will be an end – a day when we can all take a collective sigh of relief when it's finally over.

FAITH and HOPE are the words I use while I wait for the end of this pandemic crisis. But fear can water down both. In fact, it can drown them out. Thomas Merton said this:

*"You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope" (Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, p.206).*

Isn't it time to let fear die and embrace courage, faith and hope instead? Fear keeps us locked into fatigue, worry and anxiety. We get stuck in quiet despair. Each day can appear bleaker than the next.

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"For me, the Church is at its best when we walk humbly and serve boldly."

David Kasievach, Executive Director for St. James Episcopal Church school in Philadelphia

But we don't need to be afraid. We have each other and a God who is for us. I've heard it said that the most common one-liner in the Bible is "Do not be afraid or fear not." Someone supposedly counted and said it shows up 365 times, once for each day of the year. I don't know if it's true or not but I do find God's word addresses our fears again and again. When we can learn to surrender our fear to God and walk with Him through the darkness and despair, He not only brings us out on the other side, but He can breathe new life into each of us. It is then we learn what it means to trust God.

So maybe it's time to let fear die, come to our senses and believe something else. Embracing courage, faith and hope isn't just a fluffy religious concept but a provocative, life-changing idea (belief) that can transform your life. Maybe we should begin each day as **Day 1** period. No longer counting the days but living each day as it comes with courage, faith and hope.

Thank you for your prayers and support.

**Living in Day One,**

**Pastor Amanda+**

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## **CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19**

From all of us at Grace Mission we are sorry to inform everyone that our Blues and BBQ fundraiser scheduled for August 22 has been canceled. Grace Mission wants to keep everyone safe and not take the risk of possible infection by gathering in an enclosed area with more than 10 people.

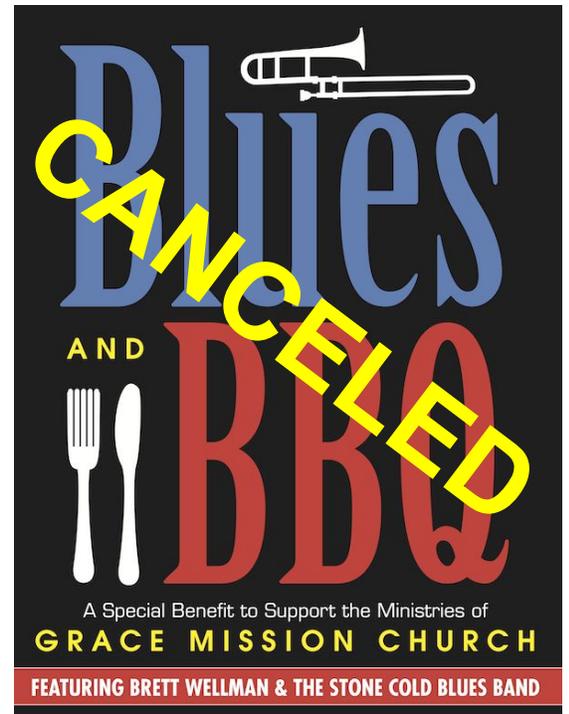
We will not be rescheduling this event in 2020 but hopefully we will be able to have this fundraiser in 2021 around the same time.

If you would like to make a donation (tickets to the event were \$10.00) to help us recover funds from not having the event we would greatly appreciate your help!

Send checks to PO Box 10472, Tallahassee, FL 32302 or go to our website [gracemission.net](http://gracemission.net) and pay with PayPal.

THANK YOU,

Pastor Amanda+



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## **Meals served 17,046 – HOLY WOW!**

**Since beginning this unusual adventure due to COVID-19, Grace Mission volunteers and staff have provided 17,046 meals for Kearney Center to three designated satellite housing sites.**

**THANK YOU to everyone that has helped us on this adventure – we could not do any of this without your help.**

# S.O.A.R.

## SUCCESS, OPPORTUNITY, ACADEMICS, AND RELATIONSHIPS



SEATURTLETASTIC Reading Academy focused on exploring the wonders of sea turtles through curriculum geared on biology, identification, evolution, anatomy, environment, threats, protection, and rescue. Students identified sea turtles, differences between man and this ancient reptile, designed timelines, expanded vocabulary, practiced reading, and created their own original artwork.



During JOURNEY BEYOND, a new Grace Mission camp of discovery, students visited the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab. Here, they enjoyed extraordinary experiences exploring touch tanks, holding starfish, crabs, and sea snails, feeding sharks, petting stingrays, holding horseshoe crabs, and saying “Hello,” to LaHerc, a blind LoggerHead sea turtle rescued by the turtle hospital and lab! In addition, we visited Bald Point State Park, Tallahassee Museum, Maclay Gardens, and Shell Point Beach. As we learned about nature, we are reminded to be loving disciples of Christ by learning everything we can to make a difference as good stewards of God’s earth.



### *Counting our blessings.....*

- St. John’s Episcopal Church, Community Market Grant
- Father Brian Smith and the Ruge Hall EUC at FSU
- Jill Leach, Jan Bush, and the Blalock family
- Mollie Palmer & Native Nurseries
- Dawn Griffin & The Quilter’s of Tallahassee
- Peggy Alan & Sustainable Tallahassee, Rags 2 Bags
- Kiwanis Bradfordville
- ....and the many ministry partners, friends, and volunteers that helped provide a safe and educational camp experience for our students....**THANK YOU!**

We are currently finalizing fall tutoring programs and services to offer online tutoring options and family connection. More information coming soon.

Backpack Blessings in progress. Many thanks to our ministry partners, Lions Club and the Tallahassee community for providing school supplies this season to support our students!

**We are very grateful to all!**



# Highlights of Helpers Making a Difference



**S.O.A.R. VOLUNTEER FEATURE:** Lynaya served the Grace Mission's children programs working 140 hours of volunteer support during her senior year at Rickards High School. Her dedication and commitment provided bus monitor supervision, homework and creative skills tutoring to elementary students from Riley Elementary, operational logistics support, and overall program care to assist leadership and children with their needs.

We are truly grateful for her consistency and hard work ethic that has also led to her acceptance in the Stetson University. She is a living witness of the S.O.A.R. program's mission to provide Success, Opportunity, Academics, and Relationship. Thank you!!



The Blalock kids, Anna and Eleanor helped make candy bags with motivational encouragement cards for students participating in the SeaTurtleastic Reading Academy.



Milt provides fresh produce to Grace Mission each week.



Peggy Allen and Roberta Dixon helping with meal preparation



The FSU Chapter of Omega Psi Phi and Grace Mission's Summer S.O.A.R. volunteers worked hard to prepare backpack blessings and gift bags to support S.O.A.R. students and Riley Elementary teachers!



"We were born to be the greatest force of change. And I believe the only way people today will change is through the acts of kindness and love that lead them to Jesus Christ."

Rev. Matthew Barnett – The Dream Center in California