



GRACE COMMUNION  
SEMINARY

# GCS NEWS

A Newsletter for Students and Alumni of Grace Communion Seminary

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## President's Letter



### A Few Mistakes in Our Christmas Stories

In many Nativity stories, Joseph and Mary come with a donkey, are refused a room in the local motel, and Mary gives birth in a stable that very night, with only Joseph to help. People are trying to fill in gaps in the biblical story, and they probably made some mistakes along the way. For all we know, there was no donkey, and Mary may have arrived well before she gave birth (Luke 2:6). There may have been midwives to help her, and nativity stories in some cultures include lots of helpers.

The King James Version says “there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7), but Bethlehem was probably too small to have an inn. The Greek word most likely means a guest room in an ordinary house (see the NIV and several other recent translations). Due to a shortage of lumber for rafters, bedrooms were usually narrow, so Mary used a larger room for the baby. Animals were often kept in the house overnight, and the feeding trough may have been made of stone.

Babies were normally wrapped in cloth, but they were not normally placed in feed troughs; the fact that Jesus was in a feed trough was a confirming sign to the shepherds that this was the Messiah, the Savior (v. 12).

The Western world sings “We Three Kings of Orient Are.” Western legends give them names: Melchior, Balthazar, and Caspar. In some Eastern churches, however, there were twelve visitors from the east. The Bible calls them magi, and doesn’t tell us how many there were (Matt. 2:1). Christians in different regions tried to fill in the gaps in the story.

We do not know when the magi visited Jesus. Matthew 2:8–11 implies that he was still in Bethlehem, which suggests that it was soon after his birth. Herod ordered the death of all boys in Bethlehem age two and under because he may have been calculating from the time the magi first saw the star (v. 16), and Herod may have been generous in his calculations just to be sure.



Many of the details about Jesus’ birth are not known for sure, so a nativity play will have to make some guesses. Our congregation in Glendora, CA, recently held a “living nativity,” and it was necessary to make a few guesses about clothing, number and gender of shepherds, manger construction, and types of animals to portray. Some of our details were

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constrained by what we had available, and some were wrong. I am confident that none of the magi were Filipino, and that none of the shepherds wore glasses!

Such details are necessary for portraying the story, but they do not affect the point of the story. Some biblical details are like that. Many people think that Isaiah says that the lamb will lie down with the lion. It doesn't say that (see Isa. 11:6), but the point is still true. Isaiah could have made the same point by talking about mice and hawks, but it was better to name predators that were a danger to humans, too.

The details are there not so much for their own sake, but are examples to help make a more important point. Nevertheless, we sometimes get distracted by the details (and minor discrepancies) and miss the point. The

point of the nativity story is not found in donkeys, motel rooms, the gender of the shepherds, or the number of the magi.

One point we can see in the nativity story is that the Son of God became a human – not a rich and powerful person, but a baby in humble (even humiliating) circumstances. The kingdom of God begins small, like a mustard seed (or you could say a grain of rice, if you are in a different culture). When judged by the priorities of a world gone astray, God does things in an unexpected way, a hidden way. Salvation is not achieved by the methods and expectations of the world.

Scripture gives us glimpses of God's work behind the scenes, but to most observers, Jesus' birth was inconspicuous and not important. Sometimes God's work through us also seems unimportant. A relatively

small number of people came to our living nativity. But God has many ways to work in those who did come, and many ways to work in us as we prepared and presented the event.

The biblical nativity stories are about Jesus, but Jesus doesn't do anything in these stories. They show us the way that God works, and that can encourage us. We can see ourselves as participants in his story, too, and know that God is working behind the scenes. We do not judge the value of our work by external results, but we trust that God knows what he's doing and will achieve something that we cannot. He gets the details right, even when we do not.

Have a faith-filled Christmas!

*Michael Morrison, PhD*  
President

## Introducing New Faculty Member

### Charles Fleming



GCS welcomes Dr. Charles Fleming as its newest faculty member. Charles retired in 2019 from Grace Communion

International after 40 plus years of service. During those years he served as a pastor in Jamaica (1978-1991), Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean (1995–2006), and Mission Developer for the Caribbean region (2006–2019).

Charles' passions include the health of the church, mission, and spiritual formation. His love for the church led him to do a master's in managing non-profit organizations. His love for mission led him to Fuller Theological Seminary, where he did a master's and a doctorate in missional leadership. Since 2006 he has taught classes for Fuller on leading missional communities. He is excited to teach a course on missional living at GCS and is looking forward to learning with and from his students.

Charles is married to Carmen, the love of his life. He describes their family

as an "international family." Carmen was born in Puerto Rico while he was born in Grenada. Two of their children were born in Puerto Rico, and the third in Jamaica. They have all lived in more than one country and enjoy experiencing other cultures.

Charles and Carmen share a love for spiritual formation that has led them to serve in the ministry of Odyssey in Christ, a ministry dedicated to helping people experience the love of the Triune God. They consider themselves especially blessed to live close to their two grandchildren so they can spend lots of time with them.

## ANNOUNCEMENT: Tuition Increase

In June, the GCS Board voted to increase tuition \$25/credit hour starting with the Spring 2023 Semester.

This will bring our hourly tuition rate to **\$245**, and the tuition for a three-credit course will be **\$735**.

The price to audit a three-credit course will be **\$367.50**.

## Introducing Two New Courses



Dr. Jeannine Graham

We are happy to announce a new course for GCS, CM510 Old Testament Survey, taught by Jeannine Graham, PhD. This course will plunge you into a blitzkrieg romp through the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) in which you will gain an overview of the varied genres, themes, structures and core messages of this fascinating anthology of sacred writings. Spanning many centuries, the books of the Old Testament are marvelously diverse in their historical, geographical, cultural and textual

settings. Yet at the same time their diverse portrayals are interwoven like threads composing an utterly unique tapestry that bears witness to the glory and wonder of the same Almighty Creator-Redeemer Triune God whose presence underlies them all.

Attention will be paid to the relevance of historical, geographical, literary, cultural and theological contexts for

### FEATURED CLASS CM510 Old Testament Survey

faithfully and reliably interpreting the core message of each biblical book as well as how those diverse writings contribute to and connect with the overarching redemption trajectory realized in and through Jesus Christ.



### FEATURED CLASS CM514 Missional Living

GCS is also pleased to announce another new course, CM514 Missional Living, taught by Charles Fleming, D.Miss. Mission is the outworking of God's very nature and is exemplified in Jesus Christ, who is described as

the apostle, or the One Sent, who in turn sends his church into his Father's harvest field. This course explores the practical implications of participating with Jesus Christ in his on-going mission to the world.

Building on the premise that Jesus is God's Sent One, students will explore ways in which they can personally



Dr. Charles Fleming

join Jesus in the work he is already doing in the lives of the people they interact with. Perspectives, principles and practices discussed in this course can be applied by pastors and ministry leaders to help their church to effectively participate in Jesus' ongoing mission in their context.

See the write-up introducing Charles as a new faculty member with GCS.



# Grace Communion Seminary Board



*Gabriel Ojih*

## Help Us Welcome Our Newest Board Member

### Gabriel Ojih will be joining the GCS Board of Directors.

Gabriel Ojih has a Master of Divinity degree from Texas Christian University Brite Divinity School and was certified as a Board Certified Chaplain (BCC) by the Association of Professional Chaplains in 2013, endorsed by the National Association of Evangelicals Chaplaincy Commission. He served as a supervising chaplain of

clinical floors and clinical pastoral education residents and students in a major North Texas hospital for over a decade. He has served for over 30 years as elder, pastor and regional director in GCI and currently pastors full time at Grace Communion Richardson. He also serves as a coach for new pastors and others.

#### Becky Deuel Retires from GCS Board



Becky Deuel

*Becky Deuel was recognized for her faithful service to the GCS Board. Becky was presented with a plaque on October 27 in honor of her service. Thank you Becky for your faithful service to GCS.*

## Thank You Becky



Becky Deuel poses with the Chair of the Board, Randy Bloom



Becky Deuel pictured with Michael Morrison and Randy Bloom

# Schedule of Courses

All schedules are tentative

**Spring 2023:** Registration begins January 4. The first lecture will be posted on Tuesday, January 17. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, January 24 through March 20. All work is to be completed by April 17. Easter is April 9.

BI501	Biblical Interpretation	Mike Morrison
BI510	Old Testament Survey	Jeannine Graham
BI523	Acts of the Apostles	Dan Rogers
CM504	Practice of Ministry	Ted Johnston
CM514	Missional Living	Charles Fleming
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH501	The Triune God Revealed in Jesus Christ	Gary Deddo & Lance McKinnon

**Summer 2023:** Registration begins May 1. The first lectures will be posted on Monday, May 15. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, May 22 through July 24. All work is to be completed by August 13. No lecture will be posted on June 26.

BI522	The Gospels	Mike Morrison
CH501	Church History: The First Millennium	Steve Dolson-Andrew
CM511	Homiletics (in-person)	Dan Rogers
CM513	Trinitarian Worship (in-person)	Lance McKinnon
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH507	Theology of C.S. Lewis	Gary Deddo

**Fall 2023:** Registration begins August 28. The first lectures will be posted on Monday, September 11. Other lectures will be posted on Mondays, September 18 through November 13. All work is to be completed by December 10.

BI520	New Testament Survey	Mike Morrison
CM503	Christian Counseling	Ted Johnston
CM507	Experiencing the Trinity	Larry Hinkle
CM510	Polity of Grace Communion International	Greg Williams
FE501-3	Field Education	Randy Bloom
TH503	The Spirit, the Church, and Last Things	Gary Deddo

All schedules are tentative. If fewer than five students register for a course, it may be cancelled, at the discretion of the instructor.  
**Independent study, thesis and capstone courses are offered in all semesters.**

# CONGRATULATIONS To Our Recent 2022 Graduates

Master of Theological Studies (MTS):

**Georgia McKinnon**

CTS & DCM

Certificate of Theological Studies (CTS):

**Joel Calmateo     Jamie Garcia**

Diploma of Christian Ministry (DCM):

**John Gent     Annette Woods**

**The next GCS Graduation will be held at the GCI  
denominational celebration in Charlotte, NC on June 30, 2023.**



## THANK YOU FOR PARTNERING WITH GCS

As the year draws to an end, we look back with grateful hearts for those whose passion and enthusiasm for GCS have moved them to partner with us through financial support and prayer. Your sharing with us is a blessing for the seminary to be a blessing to those we serve. We pray God's grace and blessing for you in the new year.

### WE HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER GCS IN YOUR YEAR-END GIVING

Financial support from alumni and friends like you has a profound impact on the seminary's mission of *"Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry."*

Every gift is God's provision for his work in Grace Communion Seminary.



Donations to Grace Communion Seminary can be mailed to  
3120 Whitehall Park Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273  
or donate online at [gcs.edu/donate](https://gcs.edu/donate).