

LOVE & ASHES

Seventh grade was a distinctly awkward year for me. Maybe you can relate.

My body was catching up with my teeth. I had growing pain in the joints. I stuttered a bit. The haircuts my father gave me were not cool at all. And the Sears Tough Skin jeans with iron on patches that I wore didn't look all that groovy.

All this did not help me the day I looked up in social studies class and realized that God had made these amazing creatures called girls. Sitting right across from me was Bonnie Brown. I don't know exactly why or how I realized that she existed, but I was suddenly awakened.

Every day I looked forward to social studies because I could gaze at her for an entire forty-five minutes from across the aisle. I was smitten. I was sure it was love.

If I could only talk to her... maybe carry her books to class. I tried everything I could imagine to get Bonnie's attention. I even wrote her initials with mine in fresh cement outside of the school. Surely, she would notice the big heart I drew around the inscription.

Alas, all of my efforts seemed futile. It was as if Bonnie didn't even know I existed.

Then one Wednesday morning I saw my big opportunity. We both arrived at class before anyone else. Immediately, I noticed that she had something on her forehead. So, I said to her, *"Hey Bonnie, did you know that you have a smudge on your forehead?"*

As awkward a moment as it was for me, Bonnie was kind with her response. *"It's Ash Wednesday silly. Where are your ashes?"*

I looked at her thunderstruck. What was she talking about? *"What's Ash Wednesday?"* I asked.

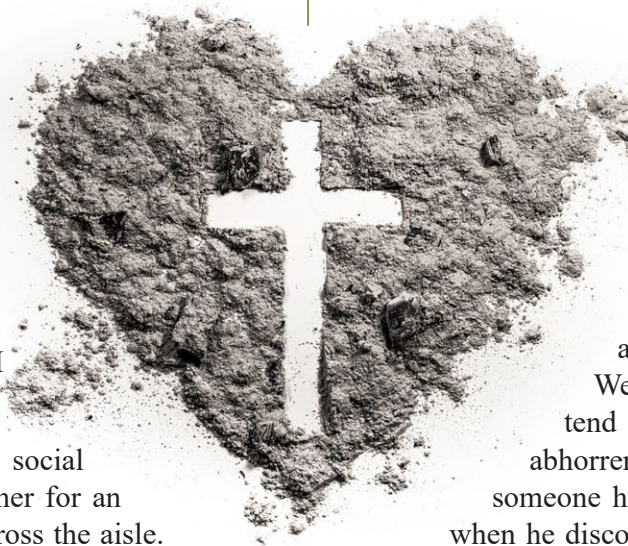
The only thing Bonnie ever really said to me I'll never forget... *"Ash Wednesday begins the forty days of Lent when I'm reminded to love Jesus more than anything in the world."*

I'm not sure how I responded to Bonnie, but I've always thought that was a pretty amazing definition for Ash Wednesday. In the Bible, ashes tend to represent repentance, self-abhorrence, and mourning. When someone hears terrible news, such as Job, when he discovers his family and possessions have been destroyed, they tend to anoint their heads with dust or ashes.

Abraham said of himself in Genesis 18, *"I am but dust and ashes."* Since humans come from dust, placing dust on our heads reminds us of our humanity, mortality, and the finite state of our nature.

Ash Wednesday reminds us that we are profoundly in need of a Savior who can give us the hope of eternal life.

It's appropriate that this year Ash Wednesday falls on the same day as Valentine's Day. On the one hand, it awakens us to the immensity of God's love for us in



Article continued on next page →

sending His one and only Son Jesus Christ to take our place on the cross for us. He literally bled and died that we might live. What a Savior!

But as we prepare for Ash Wednesday and the forty days of Lent, I can't help but to fall back on Bonnie's definition... *"Ash Wednesday begins the forty days of Lent when I'm reminded to love Jesus more than anything in the world."*

So, how do we show Jesus we love Him? I can assure you that it's not giving up chocolate for Valentine's Day... uh, I mean Ash Wednesday.

Instead, I would like to challenge you during Lent to spend an hour a day in prayer and Bible study. Add to

that... do one unexpectedly kind thing for someone different each of the forty days of Lent... and I think you'll be utterly astounded with how God uses those kindnesses.

Oh yes, one more way that you can show your love for Jesus is by focusing your thoughts on Him during Ash Wednesday worship 11 a.m. on February 14th.

With Love and Ashes –



Beginning next month, our church will be putting together some small groups to help our congregation, especially new attendees, get better acquainted.

Several volunteers will be arranging social gatherings for six.

BASEBALL ANYONE?



Our church has reserved seats for a Spring Training game at Surprise Stadium.

SATURDAY, 3/16 - 1:05 PM

**Texas Rangers vs.
Arizona Diamondbacks**

**Join us for this rematch of
last year's World Series!**

\$52 EACH - LEGENDS DECK

Includes lunch & beverage from Barrio Queen.



**SIGN UP IN
THE LOBBY!**

USHERS WANTED!

If you would like to hand out worship bulletins and help guests find a seat for worship, please sign up to be a volunteer usher.

**A sign-up sheet is
in the lobby.**

CHURCH PICTURE DAYS

*LIKE SCHOOL PICTURE DAY
BUT LESS AWKWARD!*



Our Church Photo Directory is a wonderful resource for getting to know people in our church family. It is especially helpful for new attendees to help them put names with faces.

If you are not pictured in our directory, come and have your photo taken after church on Sundays, February 11 or February 25.

If you cannot be here to have your photo taken, you can email a photo to grace@gcc-epc.com and we can include that in the directory.

You do not need to have a new photo taken if you are already pictured in the directory and are happy with the photo.

**SUNDAYS,
FEBRUARY
11TH & 25TH**



INQUIRERS & NEW MEMBERS CLASSES

Thinking about becoming a member here at Grace Community?

We will be starting classes February 11th. These classes are designed to help you understand the basic beliefs, vision and functions of our church while giving you an opportunity to ask questions, laugh, and enjoy meeting new friends!

**NEW CLASSES START ON
FEBRUARY 18TH AT 4:00 P.M.**

*(If you will be traveling at all, don't worry...
we have a make-up class).*

SIGN-UP IN THE LOBBY TODAY!

LIFE GROUPS

Here at Grace Community, we are organizing Life Groups who will meet together for fellowship and spiritual growth outside of Sunday Morning.

We want everyone to find community, not only because life is more fun when we are together, but because we know faith deepens in new ways when we are in relationship with others who are pursuing Jesus! We have five year-round groups that are already meeting.

Please share your interest in a Life Group by contacting Deb Schmitt, Life Group Coordinator, at debschmitt3@gmail.com or 360-871-0851 (call or text).

Deb will contact you to get the details needed to connect you with a Life Group.

WATCH OUT FOR SCAMS

There is a scam going around that has affected many churches, including ours. A scammer will send an email or a text claiming to be the pastor or a member of the church staff. They will then ask for gift cards to be purchased and the activation codes to be sent to them.

PLEASE KNOW THIS...

1. **Your pastor will never ask you to purchase gift cards for any reason.** The church will never contact you and request gift cards (or other purchases) of any kind, especially not through email or text messages.
2. If you have any doubts about an email or text message you receive please contact Pastor Cliff or the church office (623-975-9038). **Never call a phone number provided in a potentially phony email or text message.**

Class led by Dr. Clement

MISUNDERSTOOD PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.
in the Conference Room

(Ash Wednesday Class will start at 9:30 a.m.)



FEBRUARY'S SCRIPTURE MEMORY PASSAGE



ROMANS 10:9-10



"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."

Women's BOOK CLUB

The next meeting
will be held
Thursday, February
22nd at 10:30 a.m.

They will be
discussing *The
Twelve Months
of Christmas* by
Sheila Roberts.



SHARPSHOOTERS CLUB

The club meets every month on the 3rd Friday in the church parking lot at 9:15 a.m. Then they carpool to the range at 9:30 a.m. **February 16th is the next trip.**

Shooters will need hearing and eye protection, paper targets, ammunition, a pistol and or rifle. Please bring \$10 (cash) for range charges. We ask that you watch the following safety video <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=W2Vrc2R1oGU> if you haven't already.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

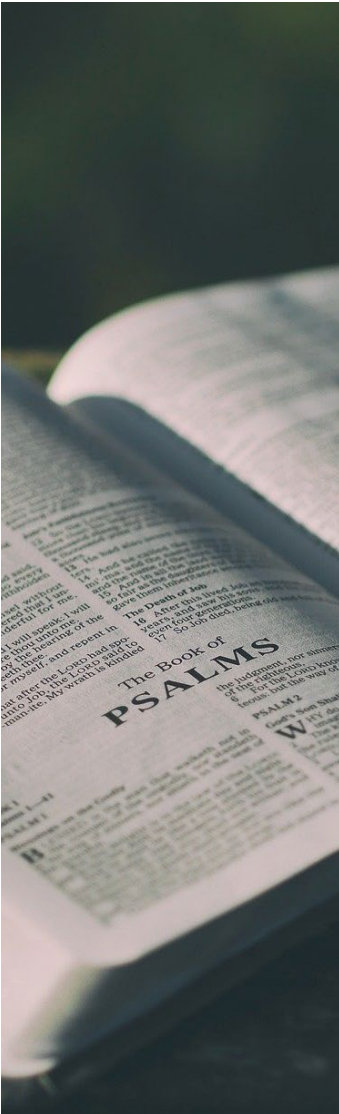
AT GRACE COMMUNITY

The Men of Grace Community Church will be holding an on-site Men's Breakfast 2/5 at 8 a.m. Our men's cooking team are excited to prepare pancakes, bacon (thick-cut!), sausage, coffee, juice and more!

FEBRUARY 5TH - 8:00 AM - GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2024

FEBRUARY 2024											
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY					
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> <p>LEGEND</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #76A53F; color: white; padding: 5px;">Worship & Study</td> <td style="background-color: #FFC080; padding: 5px;">Group Meetings</td> <td rowspan="2" style="background-color: #4F81BD; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">SPECIAL ACTIVITIES</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #C0C0C0; padding: 5px;">GCC Rehearsals</td> <td style="background-color: #ADD8E6; padding: 5px;">Other Groups</td> </tr> </table> </div>				Worship & Study	Group Meetings	SPECIAL ACTIVITIES	GCC Rehearsals	Other Groups	1 Evangelism Explosion 10:00 AM Sharing & Caring 10:30 AM Swing King Reh. 12:30 - 2:30 PM	2 TOPS Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 AM	3
				Worship & Study	Group Meetings		SPECIAL ACTIVITIES				
				GCC Rehearsals	Other Groups						
				EPC PRESBYTERY MEETING IN SCOTTSDALE							
4 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Communion	5 Men's Bkfst @ GCC 8:00 AM Women's Bible St. 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM Choir 12:00 PM Bell Choir 2:00 PM	6 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	7 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Grand Singers Rehearsal 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM Leadership Training 10:00 AM Parkinson Group 3:00-4:30 PM	8 Evangelism Explosion 10:00 AM Deacon's Meeting 2:00 PM Swing Kings Rehearsal 12:30 - 2:30 PM	9 TOPS Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 AM GUITARS ON FIRE CONCERT 4:00 PM	10					
11 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Ordination and Install of Deacons and Elders <i>Pictures Taken Following Service</i>	12 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible St. 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM Choir 12:00 PM Bell Choir 2:00 PM	13 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	14 Dr. Clement Class 9:30 AM ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE 11:00 AM Game Day 1:00 PM	15 Evangelism Explosion 10:00 AM Sharing & Caring 10:30 AM Swing Kings Rehearsal 12:30 - 2:30 PM	16 TOPS Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 AM Sharpshooters 9:30 AM Finance Team 10:00 AM	17					
18 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM New Member's Class - 4:00 PM	19 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible St. 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM Choir 12:00 PM Bell Choir 2:00 PM	20 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	21 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Session Meeting 1:30 PM Grand Singers Rehearsal 12:00 - 4:00 PM	22 Evangelism Explosion 10:00 AM Women's Book Club 10:30 AM Swing Kings Rehearsal 12:30 - 2:30 PM	23 TOPS Meeting 8:00 - 10:00 AM Funeralwise 10:00 AM	24					
25 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Baby Bottle Dedication Pictures Taken Following Service New Member's Class - 4:00 PM	26 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM Choir 12:00 PM Bell Choir 2:00 PM	27 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	28 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Game Day 1:00 PM	29 Evangelism Explosion 10:00 AM Swing Kings Rehearsal 12:30 - 2:30 PM							



WHY READ THE BIBLE?

By Billy Graham

Today, many people keep the Bible a closed book. One reason is because we don't realize how much we need it. If I suggested that you stop eating for a few months, you'd ignore me—and rightly so. We need food in order to survive, and without food we'll grow weak and eventually die.

Yet many Christians are spiritually starved and weak because they ignore the spiritual "food" God has provided in the Bible. The Bible is not an option; it is a necessity. You cannot grow spiritually strong without it.

Job said, *"I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread"* (Job 23:12). Is the Bible this important to you?

Don't look on the Bible as a bad-tasting medicine—think of it instead as a delightful food that God has

given us to strengthen our souls! The Psalmist said, *"Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord"* (Psalm 1:1-2).

You see, God wants you to grow in your faith—and one of the ways that happens is through reading God's Word and letting its truth sink deeply into our hearts and minds. Through the Bible we learn how God wants us to live, and we learn too what He has done to save us.

Most of all we discover who He is and what He wants to do in our lives. The Apostle Paul put it this way: *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).



A LITTLE CHANGE... CHANGES LIVES!

Pick up a bottle in the lobby and fill with coins, cash, or checks. All donations make a positive impact on young families in our community.

RETURN YOUR BOTTLE BY 2/25.

Your donations to Choices helps meet the needs of your community by providing:

- ♥ Free Pregnancy Testing
- ♥ Free Ultrasounds
- ♥ Low Cost STD Testing
- ♥ Abortion Risks Info
- ♥ Adoption Info
- ♥ Parenting Classes
- ♥ and more...

You can also make an online donation by going to ChoicesAZ.com/bbd-grace-community

PRAYERS FOR LENT

A LENTEN PRAYER TO KNOW GOD MORE

O Heavenly Father,

Please help me this day. Give me eyes to see how you are at work in every one of my circumstances. Lord, give me perseverance to increase my understanding of you. Give me a hunger to read your Word and to seek to know you more each day. Just as the dawn comes with its exact precision, help me to trust that You will also move in my life, in your perfect timing and in your beautiful way. In your name I pray O Christ my Savior, amen.

A LENTEN PRAYER TO PLACE GOD FIRST

Dear Father in Heaven,

It is You who rides on the clouds and holds the reign on thunder and lightening. You, alone, sit over all of creation. Creator of the universe, everything and everyone in it, You have named each star and knit each heart. Your knowledge of every creature in creation is intricate, as only one's creator could possess. Any idol I have set before You in my life, I pray to be revealed, knocked down, and crushed. So many priorities, people, and pursuits threaten to grab my attention and steal my time from You. But it's You, and my time in Your presence, that fills me with exclusive joy! Make me aware of the off ramps I'm tempted to navigate; the shortcuts that detour and derail me from the life and light of Your presence. I sing to, and for You. You are my Author, Father, and Friend. There is no one or nothing I love more than You, God. Search my heart, and set it right (Psalm 139:23). Cleanse me from my hidden sin (Psalm 19:12). Restore and renew me this day, as I pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

PRAYER TO WALK HUMBLY THROUGH LENT

Precious Father,

In Micah 6:8, You say, "O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Today we choose to walk humbly with You. We choose to live by Your Holy Spirit and to follow Your lead. Help us to hear You clearly, for we do not want to walk by pride or self-sufficiency, we want to walk with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Pancake BREAKFAST TRAIL LIFE FUNDRAISER



SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 16TH

8 AM - 11 AM

Join us for a pancake breakfast fundraiser to support Trail Life Troop AZ-0001. Pancakes, sausage, coffee, juice and water will be served. The meals will be served by the Trailmen.

PRESALE TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON:

\$5 each - Kids (10 & under), \$10 each - Adults



PREPARE, REMEMBER, CELEBRATE

Funeral Pre-Planning Workshop

FRIDAY, FEB. 23RD, 10 AM

Have you thought about your end-of-life plans?

So many of us prefer to put this off. It's too awkward to discuss. Then things happen and...

As believers in Christ, we realize that everyone is going to one day pass from this mortal coil, and we should be prepared for that part of the journey.

That's why we are offering a funeral pre-planning workshop in conjunction with Reverend Bill Davis of Funeralwise and Preneed Services. Bill is a very gracious man who has been assisting people with funeral planning for more than twenty-five years.

This is not a sales presentation, and the seminar is free.

PLEASE SIGN-UP IN THE LOBBY.

Presented by:

FUNERALwise
Prepare. Celebrate. Remember.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

Pastor Cliff is asking for stories of how God has worked in your life lately. Perhaps He's used you to lead someone to Christ or to encourage someone in faith. Maybe God's worked a miracle in your life or someone else has blessed you with something spiritually uplifting. Please tell Pastor Cliff all about it in person or an email as soon as possible. His email address is pastorcliff@gcc-epc.com.



GAME DAYS

Join us for fun and games on the
**2nd & 4th Wednesdays
of the Month @ 1PM**

Bring along your favorite
games and snacks to share.

2023-2024 CONCERT SERIES

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT CONCERT...



GUITARS ON FIRE

Gal Drimmer

**FRIDAY, 2/9
4:00 PM**

Sign-Up Online at
GCC-EPC.com/events

Sunday School

Join us on Sunday mornings before the service for study and fellowship.

This month we will be featuring a video series by Louie Giglio.

SUNDAYS • 8:30 A.M.

TUESDAY MORNING

— PRAYER GROUP —

MEET US IN THE
PRAYER ROOM, EVERY
TUESDAY AT 9:45 AM



THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS

FINDING FAITH & HOPE
IN A FALLEN WORLD

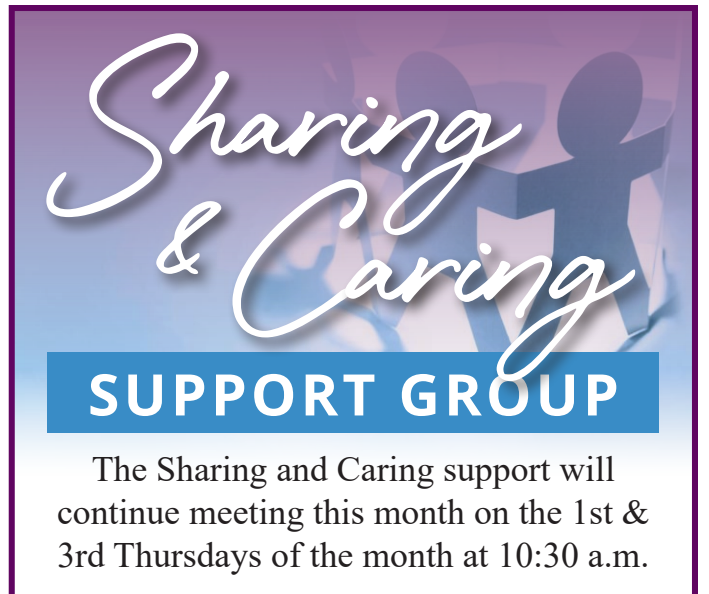
Pastor's Bible Study
Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m.



Sharing & Caring

SUPPORT GROUP

The Sharing and Caring support will continue meeting this month on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month at 10:30 a.m.





EVANGELISM EXPLOSION?

**CLASS TAUGHT BY
PASTOR BUD ENGSTROM**

THURSDAYS AT 10 AM

Evangelism Explosion is a ministry that trains people how to share their faith in Christ and how to bring people from unbelief to belief.

**BEGINS ON THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 1ST**

MISSIONS OF GRACE COMMUNITY

Mission has always been at the heart of the Gospel... therefore mission is always at the heart of Grace Community Church.

Jesus made the mission mandate for His Church in John 20:21 where He says, *“As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You.”* And then again in Matthew 28 He commands us to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”*

Grace Community Church dedicates a minimum of 10% of our budget plus special offerings to supporting missionary efforts here and throughout the world. The following individuals and agencies represent most of the missions we support:

- Choices Pregnancy Care Center
- CRU (Campus Crusade at ASU), Jordan Okamoto & Balaji Karuppusamy
- EPC World Outreach: John & Dawn, Dave & Wendy, Jeff & Lynn, Ed & Nan
- Friends of the Sram Ashrams of India, Dr. Clement & Naveen
- In Faith (Presbytery of the West Church Plant), Colin Deay
- Mercy In Action International
- Phoenix Rescue Mission
- Radio Ministries
- Ripe for the Harvest & Street Level Ministries, Scott & Dalia Coulson
- Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child
- Trail Life USA, Arizona Troop One
- United Soccer Chaplains, Brad Kenney

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Orian Sampson.....	2/3
Barbara Martin.....	2/10
Betty Eldridge.....	2/11
Shirley Breen.....	2/20
Scott Coulson.....	2/24
Abigail Mansley.....	2/25
Barbara Laursen.....	2/26

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Lennie & Barbara Devine.....	2/4
Peter & Janet Kosky.....	2/6
Tom & Connie Merritt.....	2/8
Steve & Nancy Wilmeth.....	2/14
Diane & Michael Wilton.....	2/14
Wayne & Louise Adams.....	2/16
Jim & Ruth Lee.....	2/19

SAVE THE DATE

On Sunday, February 18th we will be celebrating every one turning 90 (or older).

Join us for cake after the service.



PRAYER CHAIN

Prayer requests can be submitted on our website at gcc-epc.com/prayer-warriors

If you prefer, you can also directly contact Pastor Cliff (pastorcliff@gcc-epc.com), the church office (grace@gcc-epc.com), or your assigned deacon.

You can also sign up to be included in the prayer chain at the webpage listed above.



Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Rev. Cliff Mansley
Pastor

16165 W. Mountain View Blvd.
Surprise, AZ 85374

Worship Service Time:
10:00 a.m.

Office Hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Contact Information:
Phone: 623-975-9038
Fax: 623-537-5565

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gcc-epc.com

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grace@gcc-epc.com