

THE PRETTY UGLY BEAUTIFUL CROSS

In high school I remember buying a cross to wear around my neck. It was cool. For some weird reason I thought it might attract girls. I know, how could your pastor admit to such a thing!?! But it's true.

Some guy asked me why I wore the cross. *"Uh, because it's cool and I go to church?"*

He wouldn't relent. *"You don't even know what it means to wear the cross do you?"* It was more of an accusation than a question.

I don't exactly recall the nature of my reply, but his challenge planted some questions in my brain. After I thought about it, it did seem kind of strange that I would wear an instrument of death around my neck as jewelry.

People at the time of Christ didn't think that the cross was a pretty thing. It was an ugly thing. In fact, it was so ugly that early Christians typically didn't use the cross as a symbol of the faith because crucifixion evoked the shameful death of a slave or criminal. It wasn't until 400 years after Christ's death that the cross became more of an acceptable public image for Christians.

The truth be told, the word "cross" was so ugly that to say to someone *"May you be nailed to the cross"* was synonymous with telling someone to *"Go to Hell."* As St Augustine once said, "the very word (cross) is harsh to the ears." Roman citizens were typically spared death by crucifixion because it was so horrifyingly, excruciatingly painful.



When Jewish leaders plotted against Jesus, Judas betrayed him, Herod and Pilate tried him, and the Roman soldiers executed him... it all led up to a cross. As Luke puts it in Acts 2:23, *"Wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross."*

But why did Christ have to die on a cross? There are many reasons for His sacrifice.

Acts 2:23 also says, Jesus was *"handed over by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge."* So, God had a hand in this, but why?

Because our sins separated us from God who is wholly righteous in that He demands just payment for our sins... a payment we couldn't make. Instead, God the Father sent His only begotten Son to make the payment for us.

1 Peter 3:18 says, *"Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."*

Paul agrees with Peter in Ephesians 2:13, *"You who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."*

Our sins kept us far from God. The Bible doesn't mince words when it comes to human disobedience and its consequences. Paul says in Romans 6:23 that *"the wages of sin is death."* All humans stand condemned before God; our sins separate us from him whose character is pristine holiness and perfect justice.

When Jesus died on the cross for us a great exchange

Article continued on next page →

took place. It was in that astounding act of crucifixion Jesus became our substitute by taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins and imputing to us His righteousness. This is the only way that our sins can be forgiven.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, the one who “*knew no sin, became sin*” —our sin— so that we might receive mercy.

Mark 10:45 tells us that Jesus paid the price for our redemption when he “*gave his life as a ransom in the place of many.*”

According to Romans 3:25, “*God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood,*” exhausting God’s wrath against our unrighteousness.

Paul reminds us that Jesus’s death in our place is of first importance and was in accordance with the Old Testament Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 15:3. His death fulfills the old covenant sacrifices, such as the sin offering, the Passover lamb, and the scapegoat of the

Day of Atonement. He’s the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:5 who was “*pierced for our transgressions.*”

Two texts from Romans make this clear: “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). Christ’s death puts beyond all doubt the fact that God loves us. It assures us that no matter what life throws at us, we can trust that “*he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all... will also graciously give us all things*” (Romans 8:32)

These are just a few of the reasons we can call the pretty ugly cross... beautiful. I trust that your heart will be fixed upon it as we approach Holy Week and Resurrection Sunday. Just remember, however, that the cross is now empty. Why? Because Christ is risen... He is risen indeed!

With Love in Christ,



STEEL GIRDERS



*for Mind
Builders*

Join Dr. Clement at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays beginning in March

Ever wonder about questions like...

- Who really is God... why should I care about what He thinks?
- Why follow Jesus when there are so many religions to choose from?
- How's it all going to end... is there really a rapture?
- Does Jesus really save us from Hell and did Jesus really go there?
- Times have changed... isn't the LGBTQ movement okay?
- What's this business about demons?

If You Have Questions Like These... PLAN ON ATTENDING!!!

A top-down view of various flowers including tulips and chrysanthemums in shades of pink, purple, and yellow, set against a dark, textured background.

Easter 2024

PALM SUNDAY

MARCH 24TH

Worship Service

10:00 a.m.

LAST SUPPER & SERVICE OF THE SHADOWS

MARCH 28TH

Worship Service

5:00 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY

MARCH 31ST

Worship Service

10:00 a.m.

A graphic for Game Days featuring wooden blocks with letters G, C, and C, and a blue background with a stylized building.

GAME DAYS

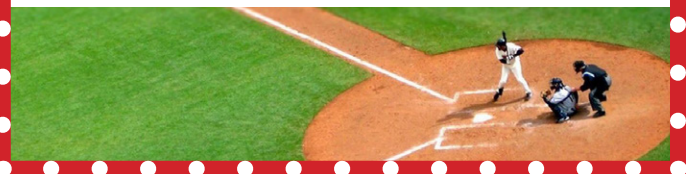
Join us for fun and games on the
**2nd & 4th Wednesdays
of the Month @ 1PM**

Bring along your favorite
games and snacks to share.

BASEBALL ANYONE?

If you purchased tickets for the
baseball game on 3/16, please
see Patti French in the church
office to pick up your tickets.

The ticket cost is \$52 per person.





Women's BOOK CLUB

The book for March is: *The Foxhole Victory Tour* by Amy Lynn Green

“Based on true World War II stories of life in the USO variety shows, worlds collide when performers from around the United States come together to tour North Africa.”



**MEETING THURSDAY,
MARCH 14TH, 10:30 A.M.**

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.**

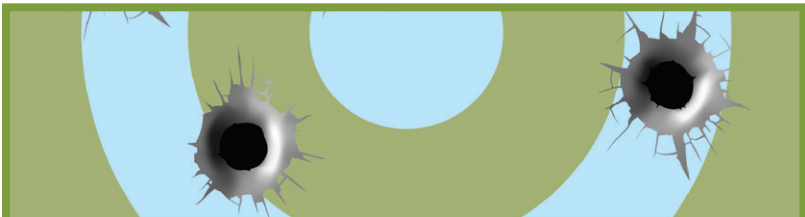


Arizona
Swing Kings

OPEN REHEARSALS

THURSDAYS, 2:30-4:30 P.M.


Come and enjoy the music as the Swing Kings rehearse every Thursday.



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. **March 15th 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.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY PASSAGE FOR MARCH

1 PETER 3:18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...



SIGN UP IN THE LOBBY

MEN'S BREAKFAST

AT GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Men of Grace Community Church will be holding an on-site Men's Breakfast on March 4th at 8 a.m. Our men's cooking team is excited to prepare pancakes, bacon (thick-cut!), sausage, coffee, juice and more!

Dave Kell teaching at last month's breakfast.



MARCH 4TH - 8:00 AM - GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

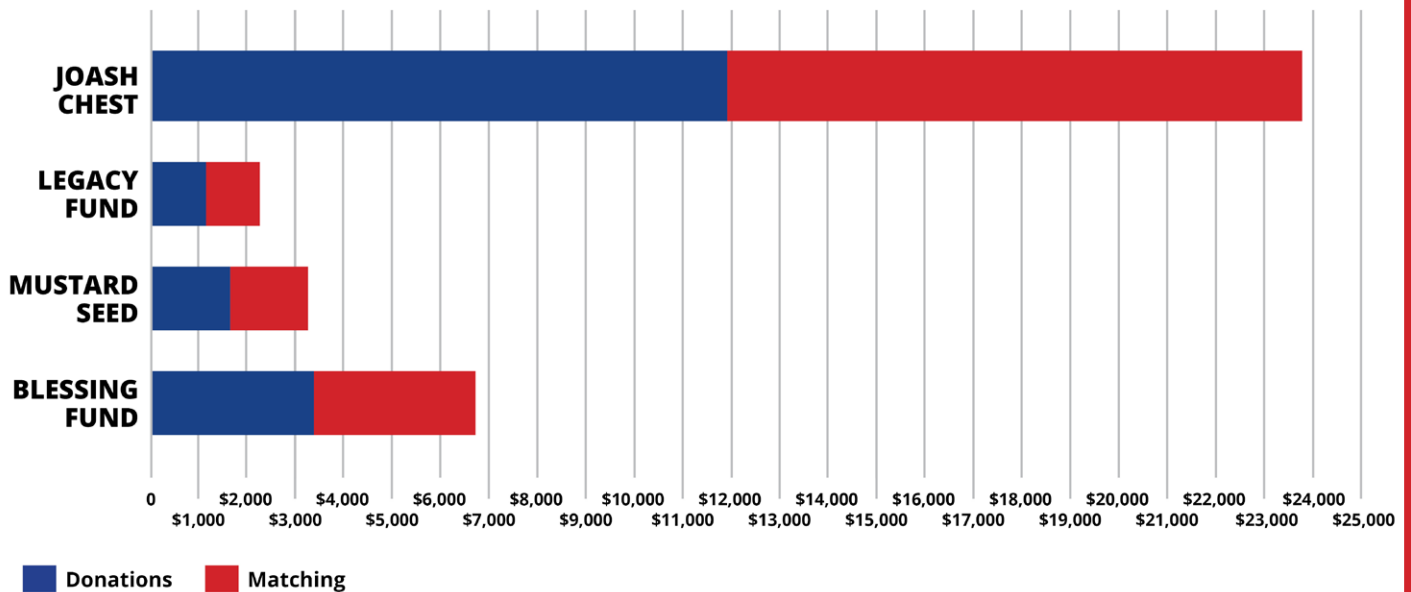
EVANGELISM EXPLOSION?

CLASS TAUGHT BY
PASTOR BUD ENGSTROM

THURSDAYS AT 10 AM
THROUGH HOLY WEEK

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

ABOVE & BEYOND



Sunday School

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

SUNDAYS • 8:30 A.M.

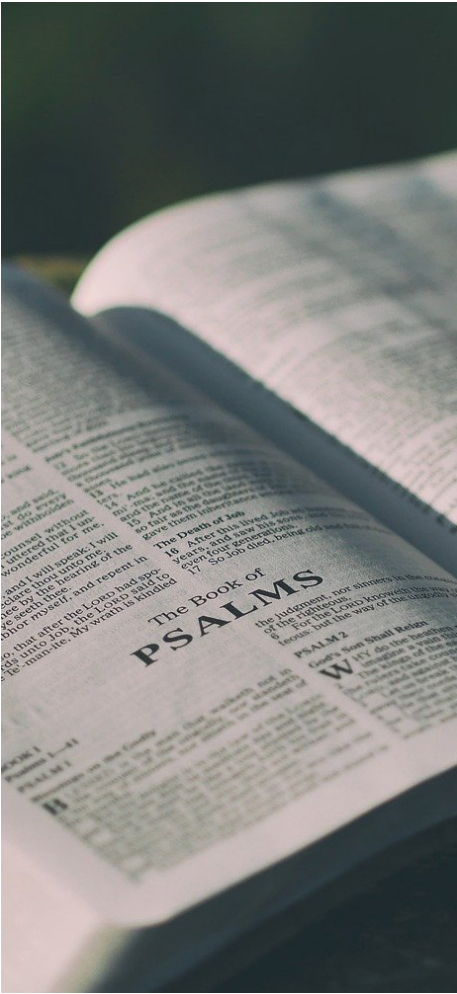
Sharing & Caring

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.

MARCH 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY						
					1 TOPS Meeting 8 AM - 9:30 AM March for Life - GCC 9:00 AM	2						
3 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Communion New Member's Class - 4:00 PM	4 Men's Breakfast at GCC 8:00 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM	5 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	6 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Grand Singers Rehearsal 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM Parkinson Support Group 3:00-4:30 PM	7 Choir Rehearsal 9:00 -11:00 AM Evangelism Exp. 10:00 AM Sharing & Caring 10:30 AM Bell Choir 1:00 PM Swing Kings Reh. 2:30 - 4:30 PM	8 TOPS Meeting 8 AM - 10 AM PROMUSICA WOMEN IN SONG 4:00 PM	9						
10 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM New Member's Class - 4:00 PM	11 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM	12 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	13 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Game Day 1:00 PM	14 Choir Rehearsal 9:00 -11:00 AM Evangelism Exp. 10:00 AM Women's Book Club 10:30 AM Bell Choir 1:00 PM Deacon's Meeting 2:00 PM Swing Kings Reh. 2:30 - 4:30 PM	15 TOPS Meeting 8 AM - 9:30 AM Sharpshooters 9:00 a.m.	16 TRAIL LIFE PANCAKE BREAKFAST 8 AM - 11 AM BASEBALL GAME 1:05 PM <i>(FOR TICKET HOLDERS)</i>						
17 Sunday School 8:30 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM New Member's Class - 4:00 PM	18 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM	19 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM Trail Life 6:00 PM	20 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Session Meeting 1:30 PM Grand Singers Rehearsal 12:00 - 4:00 PM	21 Choir Rehearsal 9:00 -11:00 AM Evg. Exp. 10:00 AM Sharing & Caring 10:30 AM Bell Choir 1:00 PM Swing Kings Reh. 2:30 - 4:30 PM	22 TOPS Meeting 8 AM - 9:30 AM	23						
24 Sunday School 8:30 AM PALM SUNDAY SERVICE 10:00 AM Presenting New Members	25 Men's Bible Study 9:00 AM Women's Bible Study 9:30 AM Worship Meeting 11:00 AM	26 Prayer Gathering 9:45 AM Pastor's Bible Study 11:00 AM	27 Dr. Clement Class 10:00 AM Game Day 1:00 PM	28 Choir Rehearsal 9:00 -11:00 AM Evg. Exp. 10:00 AM Bell Choir 1:00 PM SPECIAL SERVICE 5:00 PM <i>Maudy Thursday</i>	29 TOPS Meeting 8 AM - 9:30 AM <i>Good Friday</i>	30						
31 EASTER SERVICE 10:00 AM	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>LEGEND</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Worship & Study</td> <td style="width: 33%; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Group Meetings</td> <td style="width: 33%; border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">SPECIAL ACTIVITIES</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">GCC Rehearsals</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">Other Groups</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </div>					Worship & Study	Group Meetings	SPECIAL ACTIVITIES	GCC Rehearsals	Other Groups		
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WHY READ THE BIBLE?

*We should read and study the Bible
because it is God's Word to us.*

The Bible is literally “God-breathed” according to 2 Timothy 3:16. In other words, it is God’s very words to us.

There are so many questions that philosophers have asked that God answers for us in Scripture. What is the purpose to life? Where did I come from? Is there life after death? How do I get to heaven? Why is the world full of evil? Why do I struggle to do good?

In addition to these “big” questions, the Bible gives much practical advice in areas such as: What do I look for in a mate? How can I have a successful marriage? How can I be a good friend? How can I be a good parent? What is success and how do I achieve it? How can I change? What really matters in life? How can I live so that I do not look back with regret? How can I handle the unfair circumstances and bad events of life victoriously?

UPDATE:
Together our church collected **102 bottles** filled with coins, cash and checks for Choices Pregnancy Centers.

JOIN US IN THE PRAYER ROOM

**PRAYER
GROUP**

EVERY TUESDAY, 9:45 AM

Please Bring in
FRESH FLOWERS
on
EASTER SUNDAY
for our
**FLOWERING
CROSS**



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.**

THE GOSPEL IN GENESIS

**FINDING FAITH & HOPE
IN A FALLEN WORLD**

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

Pancake BREAKFAST TRAIL LIFE FUNDRAISER



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.

**TICKETS AVAILABLE SUNDAYS
AFTER THE CHURCH SERVICE**

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

A poster for a Tea Party & Style Show. The background is a close-up of several ornate, floral-patterned teacups and saucers. A blue decorative frame in the center contains the text.

SAVE THE DATE

*Tea Party
& Style Show*

APRIL 20TH, 12 PM

Volunteers are needed to help "host" tables. Please contact Betty Eldridge if interested.

A poster for a Women in Song event. The background is white with a teal border. It features floral arrangements and musical notes. The text is in various colors and fonts.

PROMUSICA
ARIZONA

*Women
in
Song*

Friday
March 8th
4:00 PM

GO TO GCC-EPC.COM FOR DETAILS

WE HAVE RECEIVED SO FREELY...

Think about it. We give because we have received so freely. If you've received nothing, you're exempt from giving!

"What do you have that you have not received?"
Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:7. And the answer is, nothing at all. We have been recipients of ten thousand blessings from the Father.

We've been the recipients of ten thousand blessings from the Father. Psalm 68:19 in the King James Version reads, ***"Daily, He loadeth us with benefits!"***

Our Lord said in Matthew 10:8, ***"Freely you have received; freely give."***

Friend, when the Lord stops giving to you, then you may quit being generous with others. But not until then.

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.

**NATIONAL
DAY OF
PRAYER**



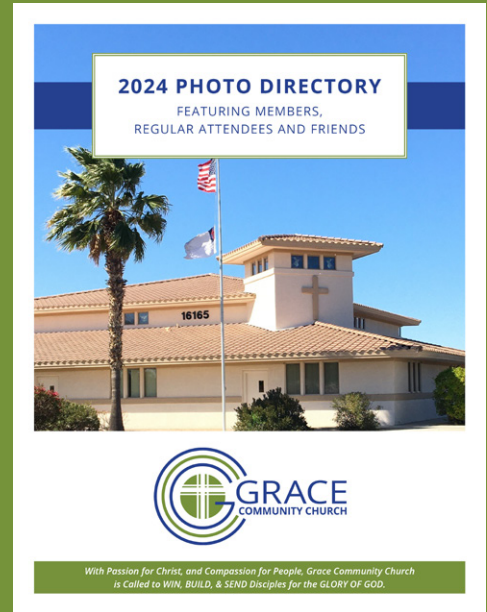
**LIFT UP
THE WORD
LIGHT UP
THE WORLD**

2 Samuel 22:29-31

**SAVE THE DATE FOR
A SPECIAL SERVICE ON**

**THURSDAY,
MAY 2, 2024**

**UPDATED PHOTO
DIRECTORIES WILL
BE AVAILABLE ON
SUNDAY, MARCH 10TH**



*If you didn't get your photo
taken, you can email a photo to
grace@gcc-epc.com*

**PLEASE NOTE ON
THE CALENDAR:**

**CHOIR & BELL
REHEARSALS
ARE BACK ON
THURSDAYS
IN MARCH.**



HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTISED?

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” – Romans 6:4

Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? The Bible tells us that every one of us must make a decision as to whom we will follow... either Jesus Christ or the world, the flesh and the devil. If you’ve made the decision to follow Jesus then we’re taught that we must be baptized as an outward sign of Christ’s inward work of grace. Please take time to visit with Pastor Cliff if you haven’t yet taken the very important step of being baptized.



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.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Jeanette Hixson	3/2
Bob Spencer	3/2
Vicki Tupker.....	3/3
Hal Graham.....	3/9
Bob Kallberg.....	3/10
Shirley Fuhrmark	3/11
Burt Sibley	3/11
Kim Hixson.....	3/14
Deborah Schmitt	3/19
Kathy Battiste.....	3/22
Susan Farrier	3/22
Ned Davis.....	3/24
Betty Paulsen	3/26
Darlene Bruere	3/31
Suzanne Urwiller	3/31

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

Merv & Ava Olson	3/8
Michele & Eural Southerland	3/29



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

Website Address:
gcc-epc.com

E-mail Address:
grace@gcc-epc.com