

# Saints and sinners: Jack Lemmon may save marriages

I never met Jack Lemmon, but he played a part in practically every wedding I officiated in the last 25 years.

When a bride and groom stand in front of me at the altar, I tell a story from one of Lemmon's movies.

Jack, who is married in this picture, takes his shirts to Andre's French laundry. When a friend asks him why he does this rather than have his wife do them (the movie takes place at a time when wives still did shirts), Lemmon says it's because he doesn't have to tell Andre he loves him whenever he picks up his shirts.

The point of telling this story is that it is not enough just to love our spouses. We must put our love into words and say them out loud often during our married life together.

It isn't only that we forget to say those three little words. They become a chore, as they had for Jack Lemmon in the movie.

In one of the wedding services I conducted, I asked those in the congregation who had come with a spouse or a loved one to turn to that person and, while holding hands, to look each other in the eye and to say out loud, "I love you."

Well, they did it, and the church echoed with people saying "I love you." Some of them told me later that they hadn't said that to their spouse in years!

But it takes more than words of endearment to keep a marriage strong. The words spoken in day-to-day conversation are just as important. Words that would not hurt if spoken by anyone else can cause pain if spoken by one we love.



## george plagenz

• saints & sinners

There is a wonderful old Jewish folk tale about a criminal being stoned by a crowd. He said nothing as heavy rocks struck him. But when a small pebble hit him he winced in pain.

When asked why this was — why the big boulders didn't hurt him, but when the pebble hit him he cried out in pain — he said, "The pebble was thrown by a friend."

"Be especially careful," I tell the men and women standing before me who are making the biggest step of their lives, "be especially careful with the words you say to one another. In intimate human relationships, careless, hurtful words, no bigger than a pebble, can break hearts and shatter dreams. They are never 'just words.'"

You are gone now, Jack. But if it's all right with you, I'll continue to tell brides and grooms that delightful little story about taking your shirts to Andre's French laundry.

Who knows how many marriages we will save if the message sinks in?

**THE WEDDING GIFT THAT LASTS AND LASTS**

I sometimes give couples I marry an 8-inch

length of heavy-duty rope — the kind tugs used to pull giant ships in and out of the harbor. I point out how thin and frail each strand of rope is, but how, when the strands are twisted together, they make a piece of rope that can pull an ocean-going freighter.

Happily married couples, I tell them, are like that rope. They may be thin and fragile by themselves. But when their lives are entwined with each other, they can pull the marriage bark through the choppiest waters.

Then I give them the piece of rope as a wedding present.

If they don't misplace it — and it is not an easy thing to misplace — they will have a lifelong reminder of what it is that makes a strong marriage.

# Born again: Pastor's pitch on rock radio saves dying Atlanta church

By Erin McClam

*Associated Press Writer*

ATLANTA — Along Ponce de Leon Avenue, where fast-food signs stand out like neon exclamation points, Grace United Methodist Church is easy to miss — camouflaged in plain red brick, its stained-glass windows obscured by protective film.

It has spent most of a generation beat-up in a bad neighborhood, a grand old church in its dying days. Membership sagged to near nothing. The roof and pipes leaked. A small staff struggled, quite literally, to hold the place together.

Eighty years after the church rebuilt from two fires, a half-century after it became the first in Georgia to put Sunday services on television, there was talk of barring the sanctuary doors.

Until the new minister, a young go-getter from the suburbs, desperately tried one last idea. And there — on an edgy

rock radio station, of all places — began what the congregation calls the miracle that saved Grace Church.

If you called central casting and asked for a minister, they might send you the Rev. John Beyers. At 37, he has intense eyes, ink-black hair shaped and parted perfectly, a voice with a built-in echo.

He was 32 when he became senior minister at Grace. He recalls worrying about prostitutes lurking at nearby corners and cracked drug vials on the lawn. The church, heading distance from Atlanta police headquarters, needed private security.

Just as grave was the church ledger: Only a few dozen people were coming for services, leaving behind sparse collection plates.

"It's so much easier in the suburbs. Things are prosperous, and there's lots of money and families and kids," Beyers said. "Grace was in a terrible place."

It was 1997, and gentrification was taking hold in Atlanta. Not far from the church, young adults from packed suburbs were starting to move to the core of the city.

Many of the twenty- and thirty-somethings were the nonreligious children of baby-boom parents. They were Grace's best — and maybe only — chance at survival.

Beyers thought about the old black-and-white telecasts of services at Grace, the exuberant preaching and grand organ music he remembered. He decided to take the church back to the airwaves.

The playlist at WNNX-FM includes bands called Alien Ant Farm, Scapegoat Wax, Godsmack and Saliva. Listeners tune in for songs like "Fat Lip," "Hash Pipe" and "Your Disease."

Its morning show is typical big-city FM fare — wisecracking disc jockeys, celebrity gossip, the news and traffic.

The station seems an odd fit for the program Beyers had in mind.

A small business in Florida distributes short parables called Perceptions for ministers to read in 60-second radio spots, and Beyers thought the ads might be a good way to reach people.

One message teaches about humility by relating the story of a man who turns pages for concert pianists. Another teaches about disappointment by telling about a woman who mistook her boyfriend's excitement over his car for an upcoming marriage proposal.

Beyers' colleagues warned him that the radio ads were, at best, a longshot. At worst, they said, the station was unrighteous trash that had no business associating with the United Methodist Church.

Buying a year's worth of spots on the station cost Beyers \$150,000, money the struggling church could hardly afford to toss around. He went on the air two days

after Christmas.

Weeks passed. In Grace Church's majestic, Gothic-style sanctuary, there were no signs of life.

Beyers tried to pick nonthreatening messages, the ones without what he calls "brother-are-you-saved language." He tried to strike a spiritual chord without sounding too religious.

"We're not selling anything when you listen to my ads, I will not tell you how great my church is, how wonderful our children's department is, how beautiful our choir is," he said.

Greg Wood was one of the first to hear. A loan officer in Atlanta in his early 30s, he was a regular listener to the morning show. He thought of church as a condemning environment.

"You know, 'Thou-shalt-not. You're going to hell if you do this.' It was all so foreign to me," he said. "This was non-threatening religion. The messages, the

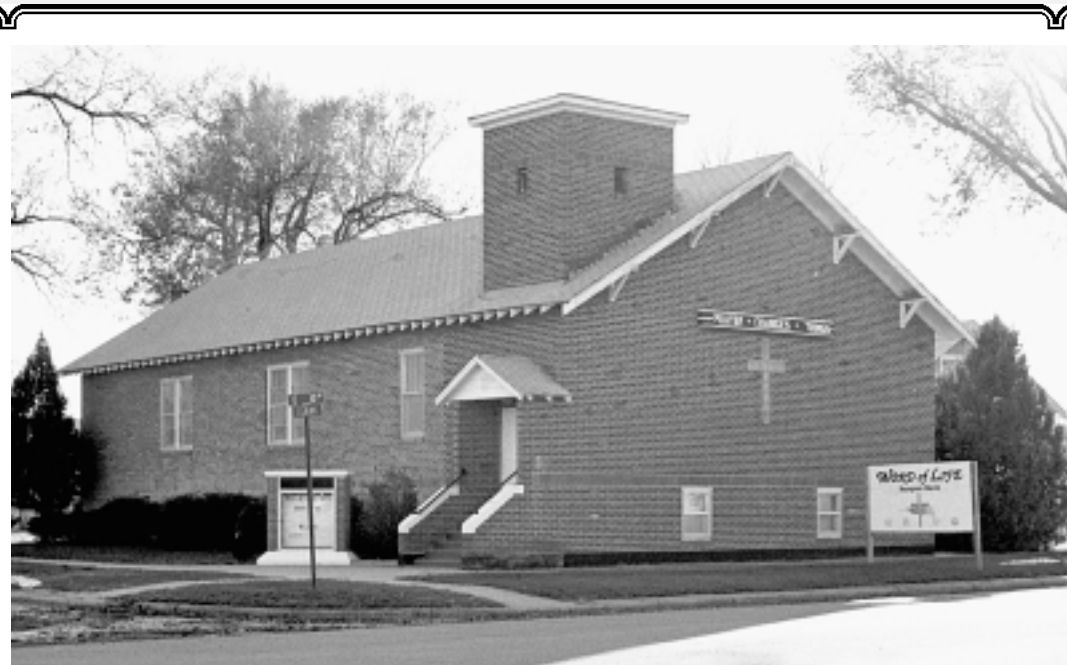
way they're presented, it really hits home."

Wood came to Grace early in 1999, about five weeks after Beyers' Perceptions messages debuted. He saw no one else close to his age.

Diane Farnell was an accountant in her upper 20s who also listened to the morning show. Between the commercials, she grew familiar with Beyers' voice.

"It was always there, and I just started listening," she said. "Then I realized he was from a church."

She joined the church earlier this year. Hundreds of young adults have flocked to the church, including some who have abandoned suburban megachurches outside Atlanta to be part of the renewal at Grace. Since early 1999, not one Sunday has passed without a newcomer telling Beyers they heard him on the rock station, Beyers said.



## Word of Life Foursquare Church

**Bible Baptist Church**  
**Pastor:** Don Crutcher  
 Fifth & Broadway  
 899-7368  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
 Worship Service: 10 am  
 Evening Service: 6:30 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

**Calvary Gospel Church**  
**Pastor:** Rev. Steve Rains  
 Fourth & College • 899-3605  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
 Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
 Evening Worship: 6:30 pm  
**Wednesday:** Family Night: 7 pm  
 Adult Bible Study and Youth Group  
**Saturday:** Prayer Meeting: 5-7 pm  
*If you would like to receive a free newsletter, please call the church office.*

**Church of Christ**  
 401 Caldwell  
 899-6185  
**Sunday:** Bible Study: 9:45 am  
 Worship Service: 10:45 am  
 Evening Service: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm

**Church of the Nazarene**  
**Pastor:** Matthew Delp  
 Third & Caldwell  
 899-2080 or 899-3797  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am  
 Worship Service: 10:50 am  
 Evening Service: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Evening Service: 7 pm

**First Baptist Church**  
**Pastor:** Bud Chester  
 Fifth & Center • 899-3450  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am  
 Morning Worship: 10:30 am  
 Evening Worship: 6:30 pm  
**Tuesday:** Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am  
**Thursday:** Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

**Seventh Day Adventist Church**  
 1160 Cattletrail  
**Pastor:** Bobby Potter • 332-3956  
**Saturday:** Sabbath School: 9:30 am  
 Worship Service: 11 am

**First Christian Church**  
**(Disciples of Christ)**  
**Pastor:** Loren Strait  
 Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9 am  
**Activities:** Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship  
**Special Notice:** Handicap Accessible, Hearing Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler Nurseries Available

**First United Methodist Church**  
 1116 Sherman  
 899-3631  
**Pastor:** Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10:15 am  
 Worship Service: 9 am

**Sonrise Christian Church**  
 Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398  
**Minister:** Tony Kafka  
**Youth Minister:** Doug Bean  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9:30 am  
 Sunday School: 10:45 am  
**Wednesday:**  
 Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm  
 Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**  
 13th & Sherman • 899-6161  
**Pastor:** Scott Grimshaw  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 8:45 am  
 Worship Service: 10 am  
**Wednesday:** Confirmation: 6 pm

**Kanorado**  
**United Methodist Church**  
**Pastor:** Leonard Cox  
 399-2468  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am  
 Worship Service: 10:15 am

**Goodland Bible Church**  
 109 Willow Road • 899-6400  
**Pastor:**  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am  
 Morning Worship: 11 am  
 Evening Worship: 6 pm  
**Wednesday:** Call for location

**Grace Fellowship Church**  
 104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423  
**Pastor:** Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am  
 Worship Service: 11 am

**St. Paul's Episcopal Church**  
 13th & Center  
 899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114  
**Priest:** Father Charles Schneider  
**Deacon:** Gretchen Talitha  
**Saturday:** Church School: 4 pm  
 Holy Communion: 5 pm  
**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm  
 Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints**  
 1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470  
**Sacrament Meeting:** 9:30 am  
**Sunday School:** 10:45 am  
**Priesthood/Relief Society:** 11:30 am

**Word of Life Foursquare Church**  
 223 E. 10th  
 899-5250  
**Pastor:** John Coumerilh  
**Sunday:** Worship Celebration & Kids' Church: 10:30 am

**United Methodist Church**  
**Brewster:**  
**Pastor:**  
 Worship Service: 10:45 am CST  
 Sunday School: 9:45 am CST  
**Winona:**  
**Minister:** Rev. Bob Winters  
 Worship Service: 9 am CST  
 Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

**Iglesia Del Dios Vivo**  
 La Luz Del Mundo  
 Spanish Speaking Church  
**Minister:** Esteban Ortiz B.  
 1601 Texas • 899-5275  
**Daily Prayer:** Sunday thru Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm  
**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**  
**Pastor:** Father Daryl Olmstead  
 307 W. 13th • 899-7205  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation:**  
 4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment  
**Mass Schedule:**  
 Saturday: 6 pm  
 Sunday: 8 am and 9:30 am  
**Spanish Mass:**  
 1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

**Pleasant Home Church**  
 Serving the rural community for over 100 years  
 Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70  
**Pastor:** Jim Cress  
 899-5784  
**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9 am  
 Sunday School: 10 am  
 Evening Service: 6 pm

**The following sponsors urge YOU to attend your chosen House of Worship this Sabbath:**

**Good Samaritan Center**  
 208 W. 2nd

**Koons Funeral Chapel**  
 North Main

**Golden Wheat Ranch**  
 Office 110 E. 11th

**Topside Office Products, Inc.**  
 1110 Main

**Goodland Daily News**  
 1205 Main