

Grace Notes

Newsletter of Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia

Rector's Reflections

"Gifts"

December and January at Grace Church are filled with our celebrations for the holy seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. The liturgical calendar leads us from "chronos" (calendar time) to "kairos" (sacred time). Sacred time marks our encounter with Christ, God's gift of love to us "at all times, and in all places."

Advent prepares us for the gift of new birth, especially, as we reflect upon the lives of John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. In the front of our Church we have two beautiful statues—John the Baptist with a lamb by his feet and Mary with the Christ child in her arms. What gifts of new birth will we experience? Certainly Elizabeth Locher's ordination to the Priesthood on December 14 is a gift for all of us to celebrate this Advent.

The 12 days of the Christmas season proclaim the reality of Immanuel, God with us. The birth of Jesus, the Incarnation, means that God so loves the world that God gives us his only Son (John 3:16). Where in our lives, in our world do we need this gift of love? The reality of illness, pain, evil and death is with us in every season. Yet "*the light shines in the darkness*" (John 1:5). During these winter months dark places need God's gift of Christ's light.

Epiphany begins with the celebration of the three Kings bringing their gifts to the Holy Family. For 8½ weeks (since Easter is so late this spring) we will follow Jesus from his Baptism to his Transfiguration as he preaches, teaches and heals before his final journey to Jerusalem. Our ministry in 2014 must reflect Jesus' own ministry.

Each January we gather for our Parish Annual Meeting to review the year past and prepare for the year ahead. We also give thanks for those who have shared their gifts with us in so many leadership roles. And we welcome new leaders, new gifts of grace.

We are blessed at Grace Church by so many gifts. May the sacred seasons ahead help us to prepare for, to experience, and to share God's gift of love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The parish staff and I send you our hopes for many blessings during the weeks ahead.

Grace, Peace, Love,
The Rev. Robert H. Malm

Dec 2013/Jan 2014

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Worship Schedule

Sunday Schedule

Holy Eucharist Rite I	7:30 am
Child Care	8:45 am–12:45 pm
La Santa Eucaristía	9:00 am
Choral Eucharist Rite II	9:00 am
Christian Ed classes	10:15 am
Choral Eucharist Rite I	11:15 am
Holy Eucharist Rite II	5:00 pm

Weekday Schedule

Tuesdays, Rite II with healing ...	6:30 pm
Wednesdays, Rite I	7:00 am
Thursdays*	12:15 pm

*Alternating Rite I and Rite II weekly

Grace Church is:

A center for worship and fellowship

A school for discipleship and stewardship

A community for healing and outreach



About Grace Notes

Grace Notes is published 10 times a year by Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria—monthly except for combined July/Aug and Dec/Jan issues. The deadline for submitting copy is midnight on the 15th of the preceding month.

The next *Grace Notes* deadline is January 15 for the February 2014 issue. Articles should be submitted by e-mail to grace.notes@gracealex.org. All articles are subject to editing.

Grace Church's newsletter team includes Amy Barron, Gary Carter, Kristine Hesse, June Huber, Lee Meeks, Teresa Preston, Sarah Schultz and Beth Wiggers.

From the Assistant to the Rector

As we sat in the small church of Epiphanie in a very small village in Haiti called Diamante, I felt the sweat dripping down my back. It was mid-day on this Caribbean island and the clergy were in long-sleeved albs with cinctures and silk stoles. I was thinking that what is appropriate for liturgical celebrations in Virginia might not be the best thing for Haiti. Despite the heat and humidity, I can tell you that there was no other place I would have rather been that day. On my lap was a basket of two dozen eggs, which the families of this dear little church had gathered as a gift for the eight team members representing Grace Episcopal Church and School. These eggs were gathered by the children, searching under bushes on the steep slopes that surrounded their homes. It took a lot of searching to find these free-range eggs. They didn't just give us the eggs; the families clapped and sang with joy as the children brought them forward with two baskets full of coconuts and papaya. These gifts represented their hopes for a new friendship with Grace Episcopal School and all the blessings that it might bring.

I think our congregation and families are going to receive far more from this little village than we could ever give them. Our gifts that we send to our mission partners in Haiti in the form of donations, computers and school supplies, come back to us a hundred-fold. We receive their blessing and prayers. Our faith comes alive from the gift of the Holy Spirit as we share Christ's love between our parishes. We represent to the people of this village that they are prayed for and simply loved for being themselves—just as God loves each of us. By a visit, they have an experience of the Church beyond their world and we become advocates for their better and brighter future. The exchange is far greater than the eggs for school supplies. God has a plan for the seeds the Haiti team scattered in the greetings and hugs and shared Eucharist in Diamante. The joy for all will be watching the harvest come in over the years!

Thank you to all who prayed for and supported the team with donations of time, talent and money. Ask any team member about the children at the Haiti Micah Project, the priest in Port-au-Prince, the Young Adult Service Corps missionaries, Fonkoze, Cange, the nursing school, the Partners in Health hospital, Madam Constant, and serving hot rice, beans and stew on tin plates. When you ask us about how the trip went, be prepared for stories that will open your heart to mission! Read the blog we kept at <http://www.graceontheroad.wordpress.org>.

Peace,
The Rev. Leslie Steffensen

THE DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA

God willing
The Rt. Rev. Shannon S. Johnston
Bishop of Virginia
will ordain

ELIZABETH ANN LOCHER
CONNOR JACKSON NEWLUN
ANN HARRIS TRUITT

to the Sacred Order of Priests

Saturday, December 14 at 10:30 a.m.
St. Christopher's Church, Springfield

The Bishop and the Standing Committee request
the honor of your presence.

Clergy: Red Stoles



Advent Reflections

This Advent, once again we prepare ourselves to celebrate the coming of our God into this world as a human child. I always have high hopes for Advent, yet I find it so easy to get distracted by all the busy activity around me. But as all around us our society prepares for Christmas as a celebration of family, of gifts and of miracles, I think all three of these things can point us in the right direction as we seek to make room in our hearts for the Christ Child.

Stores and radio stations are already playing songs about being home for Christmas, people are beginning the frenzy of shopping for gifts, and we are hearing about the “magic of Christmas”—often embodied by pointy-toed elves!

And however you feel about the way our wider culture approaches Christmas, or when we seem to start celebrating it, I think that each of the things I just mentioned can actually help call our minds back to the spirit and themes of Advent. Because as we make our way to Christmas, we prepare ourselves to celebrate a family, a gift and a miracle. We will celebrate a little family that was created unexpectedly 2,000 years ago when a young woman, engaged to be

married, found herself mysteriously with child. We celebrate that Mary, when she learned that she would have a child, sang for joy and knew that she had received an incredible gift, even if it meant that God had brought new challenges and even danger into her life. And we celebrate that this was a fantastic miracle—that God Himself caused a new life to begin within the Virgin Mary, and that this life was God Himself, come to earth in human flesh to live among us.

So when I hear about the “magic of Christmas,” or “Christmas miracles,” I think it’s not a bad way of reminding me just how astonishing and beyond our understanding it is that God was born on earth as a human. When I think about all the gift-giving, even though I find shopping to be a daunting task, I am glad that everywhere around us we have a reminder that this season is about the greatest Gift we could ever receive—Immanuel—God with us. And when people say that the holiday season is about family, I think they are right on that point, too. Because as Christians we rejoice that God became part of a human family, and that now we know Him as Father and Brother to us all.

*In Christ,
The Rev. Elizabeth Locher*

From the Library



The Christmas season at Grace is filled with time-honored traditions and joyous music. Historical evidence indicates that the tradition of celebrating Christmas on December 25 dates from 336 AD. Possibly the earliest Christmas hymn—*Redeemer of the Nations, Come*—was written by St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan from 374 to 397. Like all early hymns, it was in Latin. St. Francis of Assisi, who lived from 1181 to 1226, and the order he founded, began writing what are thought to be the earliest true carols. They were devotional poems in the vernacular and set to popular folk music. St. Francis also was the first to create a nativity scene with a crib and a barn full of animals to watch over the baby Jesus. In 1224, the Franciscans arrived in England and set about composing new carols in English for the native population. The earliest extant English Christmas carol—*A Child is Boren Amonges Man*—dates from 1350. In addition to books about Christmas, the library's holdings include: devotional reflections for Advent through Epiphany; customs and traditions of the season; and Christmas stories as portrayed in literature, music and art. Browse our collection and you are sure to find something that will enhance your Christmas experience.

Ex Libris

Music Notes

As we begin a new liturgical year in December, I invite you to join us for this year's Advent Procession of Lessons and Carols. This beautiful service stems from the original Christmas service of Lessons and Carols that was devised in 1918 by Eric Milner-White, then Dean of the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, England. Milner-White's vision for this liturgy stemmed from his experience as a chaplain in the army, which prompted him to feel that the Church of England needed more creative forms of worship. The Rev. Milner-White actually based his own Service of Lessons and Carols on an 1880 service concocted by Edward White Benson, when Benson was Bishop of Truro. (Benson later became Archbishop of Canterbury.) Benson's service was supposedly loosely based upon the ancient office of Matins, with its alternation of readings and music.

On Sunday, December 8, at 5:00 pm, we will celebrate Advent Lesson and Carols at Grace Church. The progression of readings and anthems traces the story of redemption of the human race, from darkness to light. We move from the fall in the Garden of Eden through the prophets' announcement of a Savior, ending with the Annunciation to Mary. Here humankind is confronted with the very saving action of the Word made Flesh, Emmanuel, "God with us." And literally, we move from darkness to light within the service. Advent Lessons and Carols will be followed by a simple service of Holy Communion. Please join us, and invite your friends!



On Christmas Eve, we will have our traditional offering of special music at all liturgies. At 5 pm, the Adult Choir, Boys and Girls Choir and Handbell Choir will provide music, and the King Street Brass will help lead our singing of well-known Christmas carols. At 7:30 and 11 pm, the Adult Choir will also be singing, and we will be joined by a harpist. At 11 pm, part of the prelude music will be excerpts from Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* for choir and harp (in this, Britten's centennial year of birth). The prelude begins at 4:30 pm for the 5 pm service, 7:15 pm for the 7:30 service, and 10:30 pm for the 11 pm Midnight Mass. *O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

Kyle Babin

Graceful Worship: Our "Adventure" to "Christ Mass"

Two years ago I wrote about the Advent wreath, and last year I wrote about how we celebrate the season of Advent and where those customs originated. This year I'd like to share some theories about the origins of Advent and Christmas. Much of my source material comes from J. Neil Alexander's book, *Waiting for the Coming: The Liturgical Meaning of Advent, Christmas & Epiphany*. (It's in the church library at 264.ALE.)

As I wrote last year, the word "Advent" is an anglicized version of the Latin word *adventus*, meaning "coming." But which coming? The first coming of the birth of baby Jesus on Christmas Day, or the second coming of the anticipated return of Jesus to earth. Does it begin or end the annual liturgical cycle? If you look at the appointed readings for Advent, I think that the answer is both—they are intertwined.

In its earliest form, beginning in 4th century France, Advent was a period of preparation for the Feast of the Epiphany, a day when converts were baptized. Their Advent preparation was similar to Lent, with an emphasis on prayer and fasting, which lasted three weeks and later was expanded to 40 days. In the year 380 AD, the local Council of Saragossa, Spain, established a three-week fast before the feast and baptisms of Epiphany. Inspired by these Lenten-like requirements, the local Council of Macon, France, in 581 AD, took action. They designated that from November 11 (the Feast of St. Martin of Tours) until Christmas, fasting would be required on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This was locally called "St. Martin's Lent." Similar practices spread to England.

Prepare

In Rome, Advent was viewed as preparation for "Christ Mass," but with less of a penitential bent. The *Sacramentary* traditionally attributed to Pope Gelasius I (492-496 AD) was the first to provide Advent liturgies for five Sundays. Later, Pope Gregory I (590-604 AD) enhanced these liturgies, composing prayers, antiphons, readings and responses. Appointed epistle and gospel liturgies told the story of the last judgment, the reign of Christ the King, and the Second Coming. It seems to me that Advent was at that time more often viewed as the end of the liturgical cycle, rather than the beginning. Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085 AD) later reduced the number of Sundays in Advent to four. Finally, around the 9th century, the Church designated the first Sunday of Advent to be the beginning of the Church year, as the feast of Christmas grew in dignity and solemnity.



So what about the date of Christmas? While the birth year of Jesus is estimated among modern historians to have been between 7 and 2 BC, the month and day of his birth are unknown. In the earliest days of the Church, the date when Jesus was born was far less important than the dates when he was baptized and resurrected. The New Testament gives no date or year for Jesus' birth. The earliest gospel—St. Mark's, written about 65 AD—begins with the baptism of an adult Jesus. But early Christians wanted to establish continuity between Jesus and the history and prophecies of the Old Testament, so biblical genealogy establishes him as the heir of Abraham and David. The story of Jesus, Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt harkens back to the stories of Exodus. The experiences of Zachariah and Elizabeth recall the stories of Abraham and Sarah.

The Emperor Constantine granted freedom of religion in 313 AD, and the birth of Jesus began to be openly celebrated after the Council of Nicea in 325. But why did they choose December 25? There appear to be three theories, the first two probably familiar and the third one brand new to me.

- Pagan Romans celebrated the week of December 17-23 as Saturnalia (although some sources say December 17-25, which is more than a week in my count). After Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the official state religion in 380 AD, the Church co-opted the Saturnalia festival.

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(Graceful Worship...Continued from previous page)

Christian leaders succeeded in converting large numbers of pagans by promising them that they could continue to celebrate Saturnalia as Christians.

- In the solar cycle, the birth of the sun was celebrated at the winter solstice. The winter solstice was the turning point of the year, and the birth of Christ was certainly another turning point. Perhaps a connection was made between the birth of the sun and the birth of the “Son of righteousness.”
- The “computational” theory indicates that in the ancient world, there was a belief that life began at conception and ended on the same day of the year as when you were conceived, forming a complete cycle. If you knew when Jesus died, you could compute when he was conceived and born. At that time it was believed that Jesus died on March 25. He must therefore have been conceived on March 25 and born nine months later, on December 25. (Some Eastern churches treat the dates differently, but maybe we’ll leave that for another time...)

Advent is our first season of “adventure” in the liturgical year. An adventure is “an undertaking that could involve unknown risks,” but could also be “an exciting or remarkable experience.” The word comes from the Middle English *aventure*, meaning chance or risk, back to Vulgar Latin *adventura*, then back to the formal Latin *adventus*. May the adventure of Advent and the exciting and remarkable experience of Christmas fill us all with anticipation, warmth and love.



June Huber

Grace Episcopal School

During the past 2 months, Grace Episcopal School students took part in many wonderful outreach activities for our community. In mid-October, every student walked for the homeless. Each student walked for the required 15 minutes after an enthusiastic warm-up. All the proceeds for their walk were donated to Alive! House. Just before Thanksgiving, the students had a “canstruction” project and produced Bountiful Tom Turkey, using hundreds of boxes of cereal and hundreds of cans of food (*see photos, next page*). In December, families are asked to donate hats, mittens and gloves. These will be “decorating” our Mitten Tree and later donated to a local preschool for children less fortunate than our students. If any parishioners would be interested in donating to the Mitten Tree, please feel free to place your donations on the tree. Many thanks to Jeremy Flachs, GESPA Outreach Coordinator, and Aida Longo Knowles, GES faculty coordinator, for coordination of these projects. These are just a few of the many, many wonderful and meaningful outreach projects we do at the school to give back to our community.



GES is very excited about the new partnership with Diamante School in Haiti. I met with Pere Jeannot in November, who was visiting the Washington area from Haiti to discuss ways to begin this partnership. The students in Grades 1-4 created cards for the Diamante students, introducing themselves to the students there. These welcoming cards and the school supplies collected were sent to the school in a shipment sent by Fr. Constant. We are very appreciative to Mother Leslie and the Grace Church missionaries who recently visited the school and brought back photos of the students at Diamante School. Grace School is very eager for this partnership to develop over the next months and years to come!

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(GES... Continued from previous page)

Now is the time for Grace Episcopal parishioners to apply to GES. The application deadline is February 3, 2014. The school will be hosting another Admissions Open House on Tuesday, January 21 from 9:30-11:30 am. For further information, please call Benita Cathey, Director of Admissions, at (703) 549-5067, ext. 115. Please pass this information on to others in the greater community who may be interested!

*Chris Stegmaier Byrnes
Head of School*



The students of Grace Episcopal School helped feed the homeless of Alexandria by creating a gigantic, canned-food “Bountiful Tom Turkey” on November 14, 2013. Measuring 28 feet by 32 feet, this turkey-shaped structure was entirely made of boxed and canned foods contributed by Grace Episcopal School students and their families. The food will be disseminated through the Grace Church Food Pantry.

Food Pantry Needs You



During October, the Food Pantry saw almost double the number of clients than we saw in September. We are keeping up, but could definitely use a few more volunteers to take the load off our great crew. We especially need help on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, but Friday evening help is welcome, too. GES is one of our best supporters. We are the happy recipients of our school’s annual Tom Turkey collection at Thanksgiving (see above) and the Bountiful Bunny at Easter. We also welcome parishioner donations left in our plastic box near the Tower Entrance. Our clients particularly appreciate cereal, toilet paper, rice, pasta, Hamburger Helper, canned fruit and soups. Thank you, everyone!

Khacki Berry

Outreach/Mission at Grace

The Outreach/Mission Committee provides a venue of support in several key areas—Health, Education (Tutoring), and Family/Shelter programs as well as various food programs just to mention a few. As winter sets in and the holiday season arrives, wonderful opportunities are available to help a hungry family.

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(Outreach...Continued from previous page)

Meals-on-Wheels: Volunteers deliver cold lunches and hot dinners to approximately 60 of our less-mobile neighbors on the first Friday of each month. See the article below for information on getting involved.

Brown Bag Lunch Program: Parish volunteers prepare sandwiches, pack lunches and serve lunches at Meade Memorial Episcopal Church on a regular schedule. We are always looking for more volunteers, either regularly or on an on-call basis.

Carpenter's Shelter: The Outreach Committee, Lay Eucharistic Ministers and the Grace School Parents' Association take turns preparing and serving hot meals once per month. Your donations provide a family with nutrition and hope.

Food Pantry: The food pantry, supported entirely by volunteers and parishioner donations to the Grace Food Fund, provides emergency food supplies to families and individuals referred by various churches and agencies. The pantry is open from 1:00pm to 3:00pm on Mondays and Tuesdays and 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm on Fridays. We are always seeking more hands and additional food. Please see Khacki's article (previous page) for more Food Pantry details.

Tania Wilkes



Can You Spare 2 Hours Once a Month?

Meals-on-Wheels allows seniors who are unable to leave their homes to shop, or who have difficulty preparing a meal, to have two healthy meals per day delivered to their homes. Senior Services of Alexandria, in partnership with the City of Alexandria, loyal volunteers and donors, provide meals 365 days a year. Meals are cooked and packaged for delivery by paid professional staff. As an outreach ministry, Grace Episcopal Church provides volunteers to deliver 6 routes, or approximately 60 meals, per month. Our volunteers meet at The Hermitage, 5000 Fairbanks Avenue, at 10:00 am on the first Friday of each month to deliver meals to clients. A driver and a runner are assigned to each route, and we are especially in need of runners. The time commitment is about 2 hours once per month. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Keller Smith at keller.smith@gracealex.org.



Card Ministry

If a written message has ever brought you comfort or encouragement, or added to a sense of celebration, or simply come as a pleasant surprise among the catalogues and bills, you know how appreciated a piece of mail can be. The Card Ministry reaches out to parishioners in times of illness and loss, and in the joy of birthdays and weddings and baptisms, helping show that the Grace Church community holds them in its thoughts. For some in the ministry, the recollection of how much a well-timed card has meant to them leads them to want to share that experience with others. Some are drawn by the flexibility of a ministry that one can accommodate into any schedule, and conduct from home, work or even travel. Some simply enjoy the act of writing cards (I do). Your modest investment of time can make a big difference to someone's day. To learn more, please contact john.boris@gracealex.org.

John Boris

Nomination News for Shirley Tyler

Long time Grace Church parishioner and for 20 years head of our Grace Episcopal School, Shirley Tyler, is one of the nominees for 2014 Living Legends of Alexandria.

The 2014 Living Legend nominees will be introduced at Northern Virginia Community College's Winter Concert in the Schlesinger Center, Tuesday, **December 10, 2013**.

There will be an opportunity to meet and congratulate the nominees at a reception beginning at 6:30 pm. The concert begins at 7:30 pm. You and your friends and family are warmly invited to attend the **free** reception and concert.

The 2014 Legends will be selected later in the month and honored at the annual Meet the Legend Reception, Thursday, March 20, at Alexandria's Patent & Trademark Office.

Grace's "Free Marketplace"

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." (Hebrews 13:16) Do you have things around your house that you no longer need, but you think they might find a good home with someone else? Do you have a particular talent or skill that you're willing to share for free? Or are you on the other end of the spectrum, short of cash and looking for a really good deal? On December 1, the Grace Church website (www.gracealex.org) will open up a new page called "Free Marketplace" that will enable parishioners and their friends to benefit from each other's generosity in terms of time, talent and treasures, as well as to reduce waste and save precious resources. Instructions on how to use the site will be included. Contact web.team@gracealex.org with questions.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Many of you have been with me on my discernment journey through your prayers and encouragement. It is with great joy that I share with you that Bishop Johnston admitted me as a postulant for ordination as a deacon. "Postulant" is the term for those preparing for and testing their vocation as priest or deacon.

<http://library.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/postulant-holy-orders-monastic>

Mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's writings, deacons served the poor, widows and orphans, and the sick in the early church. Deacons are one of the four orders of ministers in the Episcopal Church. The Diocese of Virginia describes the order of deacons this way, "Deacons are ordained to exercise [servant] ministry, particularly to the poor, the weak, the sick and the lonely. Deacons model servant ministry in their daily life and work, and are icons of servant ministry through their liturgical roles in worship. . . . It is also the special responsibility of deacons to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world."

http://www.thediocese.net/Ministries/Serving_the_Church/Diaconate/

In January 2014, I will begin a two-year training program. The Deacons' School is a new program designed in conjunction with the Diocese of Southern Virginia. Along with 14 other postulants, I'll attend class one weekend each quarter in the Richmond area.

During the first year of the program, I will continue to be part of the Grace Church community, worshipping and ministering with you. Beginning in 2015, I will be at another parish for 10-12 hours a week, including serving at the liturgy. Throughout the two years of training and beyond, I will continue to work at my "secular" job.

My decision to respond to God's call by seeking ordination to the diaconate occurred after many years of service at Grace Church and personal discernment. I am grateful for the guidance of Fr. Malm, the insights and questioning of the parish discernment committee and all the support I received as I took the steps in the diocesan discernment process. These clarified for me that the order of deacons is the "right fit."

Please continue to keep me in your prayers.

*Gratefully,
Theresa Lewallen*

Pledge Campaign Update: 2014—The Year of Mission

Generosity at Grace Church abounds! As of November 15, there were 194 Grace Church families and individuals pledging a total of \$669,000 for support of our 2014 budget. Our goal is 350 pledges to fund expanded music, outreach, mission and other programs we all support and care about, in an ambitious \$1.1 million budget for 2014.

JOIN IN WITH YOUR PLEDGE:

If you have not yet made your pledge for 2014, please prayerfully consider what your commitment could be, in response to God's gifts in your life. Then complete a pledge card, and place it in the offering plate next Sunday, or mail it to the parish office, or pledge online at www.gracealex.org/pledge.

The Vestry will vote on our 2014 budget on December 10. As the vestry builds the parish budget for 2014, your responses to God's Grace—the commitment of your time, your talent, and your financial pledge—are all important because of what your generosity makes possible, both in your own life and in our lives together at Grace Church.

RESULTS SO FAR:

Thanks to all the households who pledged by November 15! Your support exemplifies generous giving to Grace Church's mission in the world. About 45% of repeat pledgers have increased their pledge over last year. And in another demonstration of generosity, our first weeks of pledges increased about \$150 per pledge, over last year. If our remaining pledges yet to come in will continue that increased support, just imagine the potential for increased parish programs, mission and outreach!

On November 20, we began follow-up telephone calls to parishioners and friends of Grace Church, whose pledges had not been received as of November 15, and follow-up will continue into December by mail, email, phone and social media.

God gives us many opportunities for stewardship at Grace Church—returning to God a portion of the many gifts given freely to each of us and supporting the many ways in which we minister to one another, the community, the diocese and the world, as we proclaim and spread the good news of Christ.

Please join us as we follow the example of faithful servants and courageous stewards who have witnessed to God's Grace for over 158 years in our parish.

*Elizabeth Legere and Eugene Alford
Stewardship Co-Chairs*

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting is fast approaching (January 26, 2014). All program coordinators need to have their annual reports to Beth Wiggers no later than January 6. Please be prompt.

School Supplies for Christmas

During the Christmas season, we will once again be collecting donations of school supplies for children in need. Baskets will be placed near the crèche to receive offerings, which may be brought any time from the first Christmas Eve service until Epiphany. This year all donations will be given to the Haiti Micah Project.

65 Years, 65 Stories

This fall we celebrated Grace Church's 65th anniversary of moving to Russell Road. Grace Notes commemorates this exciting anniversary and our wonderful parish stories by asking a monthly question and publishing 65 answers/stories from the parish across the year.

Question 4: *What's one of your favorite memories of Advent/Christmas season at Grace?*

#11—Linda Waskowicz

Prior to Christmas three years ago, my husband, Frank, was hanging the star that goes above the stable on the nave floor. He called me at home and said he had just knocked the stable over and broken the shepherd. Of course, I thought he was kidding . . . not so, the shepherd was broken in several places, as was the horn. Said shepherd was repaired by Christmas Eve, though the color of the horn turned to brass instead of silver—we just happened to have gold paint. And . . . Frank painted a war decoration on the shepherd's chest—a purple heart.

After the midnight service, Frank took Fr. Malm to the crèche to see the fixed shepherd and his decoration. Fr. Malm's response to this was that it was good Frank could fix things and showed him baby Jesus. The babe had been dropped by "our shepherd," in the narthex before the 5 o'clock service, and a few of his joints were in pieces. The swaddling clothes offered a great cover-up. In the meantime, Charlie Iovino brought a similar baby from her home nativity set until the day after Christmas, when Frank repaired the Grace Church baby.

#12 & #13—Barbara Read

Going to the service on Christmas Eve is one of my favorite memories. I love all of the candles, the brass players and the Christmas trees and wreaths, as well as the hymns that we sing. Many other people feel the same way.

My other favorite memory of Christmas season is the greening of the church. Christmas trees, wreaths, and long garlands are brought into the church unadorned. One group of people will be standing at long tables in the new narthex attaching bows and red berries to the wreaths which will be hung on the nave walls and the outside doors, while others are stringing lights on the trees placed at the front of the nave. The red poinsettias are arranged around the Christmas trees, and candleholders are attached to each of the pillars in the nave with candles placed in them ready to be lit. One brave person will bring in a very tall ladder and climb up to the rood beam to hang the garlands and the largest wreath there. The figures for the Nativity scene are unpacked and placed in the straw next to the Lady Altar. When all of this is finished, the church is dressed for Christmas. When Christmas season is over and everything is taken down, the church looks empty to me for a while.

(Continued on next page...)

(65 Years...Continued from previous page)

#14—Lucy-Lee Reed, "A Visit from Saint Nicholas"

Many centuries before Clement Moore moved the great Saint to Christmas Eve, he had his own special date: the 6th of December. He was so popular in the Middle Ages for his special interventions for children, brides and sailors, and for his honesty and generosity, that to this day more churches bear the name Nicholas than bear the name Mary!

Before we returned to Grace in 1988, we had become involved with the movement back to the original Saint and date under the influence of the then Bishop for the Armed Forces who always visited in Germany in early December and celebrated a Saint Nicholas Eucharist.



When we came back here, Grace had, as a major feature of Advent, a Chrismon event with an appearance from Santa Claus. After Father Malm arrived, I proposed to him that we switch to a visit from Saint Nicholas. He agreed and, of course, we had our own red cope and mitre and a staff was borrowed from the pageant supplies. (Once when Bishop Grey was visiting, he forgot his traveling crook and used the one we had in the sacristy for Nicholas!)

After a few more years, the Chrismon event was no more and Father Malm suggested moving the visit to Sunday morning services. A script was created incorporating blessings from "Prayers for the Domestic Church" by Father Edward Hayes, whose over-the-top print of Saint Nicholas (*left*) is a favorite. Saint Nicholas always gives the children small red and white candy canes representing his staff and the body and blood of Christ, and holy cards.

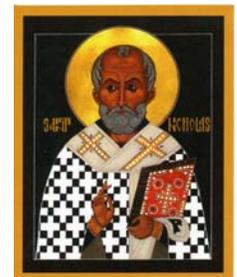
Many persons have depicted Saint Nicholas for us, beginning with David Crosby (who had been our Santa Clause before—*below, left*). Early on we had false beards available if needed, but for over 13 years we have been blessed at Grace with many bearded aspirants for the post! Many of these looked very much like the icon



(*below, right*).

Some who have helped depict Saint Nicholas: David Crosby, William Stafford, Cleve Corlett, Elliot Branch, Peter Schmidt, George Lindroth, Fred Saalfeld and David Adams. At Grace School: Jean Reed and Bob Steele. If I have forgotten anyone, please help me restore the record.

In addition to the Saint Nicholas visit, we have for many years had a display of Saint Nicholas related materials in the Narthex in early December. This came about because shortly after we returned here a dear friend was ordained on Saint Nicholas day and I began collecting things to send her each year. Relatives and friends heard about this and began giving me Saint Nicholas items. I also found many myself. (Just this last week, I found a perfect Lennox Saint Nicholas in the original box at my thrift shop for a fraction of the original price!) Thus the collection has burgeoned!



I have also occasionally given Advent and/or Saint Nicholas programs at Forum. If you would like to know more about the great Saint and the movement to restore him to his rightful place (and date!), check out: saintnicholascenter.org. I will never be able to thank Grace and Father Malm enough for letting me share this passion of mine with all of you every year.

(Continued on next page...)

(65 Years...Continued from previous page)

#15 & #16—Karen Hoppe

Our Christmas highlight is midnight mass, as I suspect it is for many people, but our version of it is a little different. Having raised three kids in the choir loft, midnight mass was characterized for many years by the preparation and packing that led up to arrival at 9:15 pm for choir warm-up. While most children were being tucked into bed with Christmas stories to await the coming of Santa, ours were being bundled into the car along with activities to occupy their time, snacks or bottles as appropriate, and pajamas (when they were very small) for later in the night, and for our last child, a mat to sleep on in front of the elevator. At first, we hired a teenager to babysit the kids in the undercroft, but by the time they were 3 or 4, they really wanted to be up in the loft, watching and singing. They caught, early on, the magic of midnight mass and the coming of the Christ Child—which overcame all the hassles of getting there. Small children especially, pick up the sights, the sounds, and the smells of high-church liturgy, and ours thrived on it. The end of the evening was the sleepy ride home down I-395 at 1:00 am, when almost no one else is on the roads. Believe it or not, it's all magical. (Except for Dad, who then had to assemble doll strollers, robot guns, etc., at 3:00 am after everyone was finally asleep.)

My other unique memory is the 10-12 years my husband staged a different performance of "O Holy Night" every year, in response to a running "discussion" between him and choir director, Johnnye Egnot, as to whether he would be allowed to sing this as a solo, she maintaining that the only way he would ever sing that at Grace would be in the parking lot. Which he did. Over the next decade, it would escalate to include costumes, lighted angel wings, backup singers, and impromptu medieval dances. Johnnye took to including it on the evening schedule for the choir ("9:05: Dave Hoppe sings "O Holy Night" in the parking lot. 9:15: be vested and seated in the choir room" etc.). I suspect there are few other choirs with that particular memory. Which is probably for the best.

February's 65 years, 65 stories Question

Question five is: ***If you were a child at Grace or have a child at Grace, what's one of your favorite stories about the children's programs at Grace?*** Send your stories to grace.notes@gracealex.org by January 15. We'd love to hear your story! Don't worry if you've already submitted stories, multiple entries are more than welcome.

December Birthdays

12/1 Florence Binari	12/8 Valerie Eudy	12/17 Mary Fox	12/23 Constance Troyer
12/1 Poppy Gardner	12/9 Deborah Crabtree	12/17 Mary Lewis Hix	12/26 Jude Adams
12/1 Rick Grimes	12/9 Zoe Moore	12/17 Charles Saphos	12/26 Wanda Fraser
12/1 Homer Hunt	12/9 Kirk Schultz	12/17 Sophie van der Sluis	12/26 Eva Lorentz
12/3 Connor Beyreuther	12/11 Juliet Carr	12/18 Luke Carle	12/27 Rob Cheron
12/3 Sloane Mebane	12/11 Alexander Everett	12/18 David Dellefield	12/27 Keagan Sullivan
12/4 Parker Green	12/11 Lindsay Howard	12/18 Clay Everett	12/27 George Winstead
12/4 Kevin Plunkett	12/12 Kristina Larson	12/19 Mac Rein Jr	12/28 Matt Tschetter
12/4 Clara Shriner	12/13 Isabella Giacomo	12/20 Diane Berry	12/29 Norma Alvarenga
12/4 Nicholas Shriner	12/13 Lucio Ovando	12/20 Pat Edelin	12/29 Stanley Borgia
12/4 Mary Walsh	12/14 Mike Stancil	12/20 Graham Murchison	12/29 Linda Durand
12/5 Jennifer Henel	12/14 Mary Carol Tazewell	12/20 Sandy Olexy	12/29 Brett Medley
12/6 Reagan Hope	12/14 Lucy Waskowicz	12/21 Holly Henderson	12/29 Steven Nider
12/6 Cameron Sweet	12/15 Peter Eckel	12/21 Fiona Sullivan	12/30 Gabriella Everett
12/7 Lara DeMarco	12/15 Greg Whitlow	12/21 Wendy Wilmer	12/31 Thomas Crabtree
12/7 Harrison Moore	12/16 John Sweeney	12/22 Priscilla Hanley	12/31 Barbara Ramm
12/8 Eddie DeMarco Jr.	12/17 Julia Cooper	12/23 Mary Lacey Reuther	

News from The Simontons

A friend recently asked how we are settling into life in Richmond. I responded that it was more like settling *out* than settling in! With the abundance of energy for nurturing and building relationships within and without the Diocese of Virginia, I'm on the Northern Neck one day, in New York the next week, and helping to welcome guests from Sudan at the Mayo House offices in between. A grace amongst and between all of this is that I'm usually home for supper with the girls most evenings—or they just travel along with me! Another grace in my work for the diocese is how often I hear myself—and others—say, “Grace.” Faithful ministries are so vibrant and moments-with-Jesus so abundant at Grace Episcopal Church that *grace*-filled stories of mission, worship, outreach and creative hospitality are prolific.



In NYC

Each day since our arrival in Richmond, I have become ever more aware of the rich formation the Grace community offered to my ministry and to our family. Whether I'm threatening a certain preschooler with a call to Father Malm over her behavior (which yields instant improvement, by the way), remembering vestment care tips from the Altar Guild, or drawing from the infinite moments at Grace when I experienced Christ's real presence in the holiness and messiness of our lives—Grace is always with me and with us. On our lips. In our lives. And in our hearts, especially now as we embrace this newest godly adventure.



In NYC—ran into The Lochers!

Thank you for *your* embrace as we said farewell to Grace and made our way down to Richmond. The unbelievably generous purse was a gift of abundance for our transition. The photo book is a treasure of favorite moments. The framed print of The Figure of Christ will always be nearby, no matter where our journeys take us, and will serve as an important reminder of worshipping the Living Christ in the beauty of holiness at Grace Episcopal Church.

*David joins me in sending our
peace, love and lots of grace,
Julie*

Dear Grace Church Parishioners,

In January 2014, I will be leaving for Renk, South Sudan. Along with three other seminarians, I will be teaching Greek and New Testament Studies to 20 seminarians at Renk Theological College (RTC), as well as 15 Sudanese clergy from around the area. The principal of RTC, Jacob Majok Panchol, was a classmate of ours last year and has invited us to serve as visiting teachers for the month of January. We will be teaching from Monday to Friday, Saturday will be spent visiting the market place, the Nile River and other areas of interest, and Sunday will be filled with worship in local South Sudan parishes.

This short-term mission brings together many of the pieces of my education from Virginia Theological Seminary. It is a remarkable opportunity that I am sure will be transformative. Please keep me in your prayers these next few weeks as I make final preparations for the mission. Please also pray for us while we are in South Sudan that we may be able to share the Gospel and experience the Holy Spirit that has transformed the lives of the South Sudanese people, a people who have lived most of their lives in civil war.

*Peace,
Chandler Whitman, Seminarian*

Upcoming Adult Forums and Inquirers' Classes

Forums

Inquirers' Classes

December 1 – No Forum or Inquirers' Class: Intergenerational Advent Crafts

December 8 – Spiritual Direction, with seminarian Josh Messick

December 8 – The Church Year: Sacred Time

December 15 – Reflections from the Haiti Mission Team

December 15 – The Gospels

December 22 – Ben and Elizabeth Locher's year of mission in Dodoma, Tanzania

December 22 – The Two Christmas Stories

December 29 – No Forum or Inquirers' Class: Lessons and Carols Sunday

January 5 – No Forum or Inquirers' Class: Fellowship Sunday with a visit from the three Kings

January 12 – Forum TBA

January 12 – The Bible

January 19 – Grace Church Budget forum

January 19 – Baptism, Confirmation and the Renewal of Vows

January 26 – No Forum or Inquirers' Class: Annual Meeting

Virginia Theological Seminary December Event

Advent Day of Reflection

9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Friday, December 13

\$40.00 registration, deadline December 6

www.vts.edu/registration

The Most Rev. Frank Griswold, Twenty-Fifth Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, will present Virginia Theological Seminary's 2013 Advent Day of Reflection, examining the mystery of time and the ways in which we encounter the Word in the ebb and flow of our lives. The day will include several addresses, space for reflection, and prayer and participation in the community Eucharist.

Growing @ Grace



Upcoming Opportunities for Children, Youth and Parents

Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany Calendar

Sunday, December 1 - Intergenerational Advent Crafts

Children's Chapel and Nursery are available as usual

10:15 am Crafts in Merrow Hall Auditorium for all ages

Sunday, December 8 - St. Nicholas Visit, Christmas Pageant Practice

9 & 11:15 am St. Nicholas visits during morning services

10:15 am All ages practice for the Pageant with their Sunday School teachers

Sunday, December 15 - Pageant Sunday

10:15 am All ages practice for the Pageant with their Sunday School teachers

2:30 pm Pageant participants *with speaking and leadership roles* rehearse in the church

4:00 pm All Pageant participants put on costumes in their Sunday School rooms

5:00 pm Pageant!

6:00 pm Pizza Party and Cookie Potluck in Merrow Hall

Please bring cookies to share. A good will offering will be taken at the door for pizza.

Sunday, December 22 - 4th Sunday of Advent

Sunday School, Children's Chapel, and Nursery are open

Tuesday, December 24 - Christmas Eve

4:30 pm Nursery and Children's Chapel open for the 5:00 pm service

Children's Chapel will begin in the St. Nicholas room. At 4:55 pm the children will go to the church and sit between the front pew and the pulpit to watch the procession and to see Jesus in the manger.

Please note this is the only Christmas Eve Service with childcare.

Wednesday, December 25 - Christmas Day

12 noon Festival Eucharist

Please note that the Nursery and Children's Chapel are closed.

Sunday, December 29 - 1st Sunday after Christmas – Lessons and Carols

9:45 am Nursery opens for the 10:00 am service

Children 6 weeks old through Kindergarten are welcome in the nursery.

Please note that Children's Chapel and Sunday School are closed.

Sunday, January 5 - Epiphany and Three Kings Sunday

8:45 am Children's Chapel and Nursery open for the 9:00 am Bilingual Eucharist

Children 6 weeks to 2 years old are welcome in the nursery.

Children 3 years old through Kindergarten are welcome to Children's Chapel.

Please note that Sunday School is closed.

Join us in Merrow Hall after the service for a visit from the Three Kings.

Sunday, January 12 – 1st Sunday after Epiphany – Baptism of our Lord

10:15 am Sunday School resumes

J2A Fundraiser — Friday, December 13 (Note date change)



Is it hard to find time to shop for your kids Christmas gifts? Do you wish you had just one night to go on a holiday date with that special someone? Then do we have a solution for you!! On Friday, December 13, our J2A youth group will host a children's Christmas PJ Party. You can drop your kids off starting at 5:00 PM for pizza, games and movies. Pick them up by 9:00 pm. We're charging \$15 per hour. Questions? Contact chad.eckles@gracealex.org.

Christmas Pageant – 12/15, Volunteers Needed!

The children and youth of Grace Church will be putting on a Christmas Pageant at 5:00 pm on Sunday, December 15. The pageant will be followed by a pizza party and cookie potluck for participants. If you are interested in volunteering to help out with the pageant or potluck in any way, from costumes to staging to party-planning, please contact Lisa Bellantoni at erbellantoni@gmail.com.



23rd Holiday Toy Drive

Again this year, Grace's Outreach Committee is supporting Community Partners for Children in its annual holiday toy drive between now and Thursday, December 19. Please leave new unwrapped toys, items for infants and toddlers, and store gift cards in the tub outside the church office. Pick up will take place December 20.



Brown Bag Lunch Week: December 16-20

Share Christmas warmth with Alexandria's needy. Volunteer to make sandwiches or to serve lunches by signing the green sheet on the Outreach bulletin board. For more information, contact Mary Fox at 703-684-6026 or mary.fox@gracealex.org.



Parish Register

Baptism:

- ✚ Catherine Beal Reuther, daughter of William and Mary-Lacy Reuther, sister of Franklin and Emily

January Birthdays

1/1 Judy Miller
 1/2 Edward Burkhalter
 1/2 Mira Chiow
 1/2 Jane Joyner
 1/3 Chris Corlett
 1/3 Yasuhiko Kamakura
 1/3 Dina Salamanca
 1/4 Michelle Cox
 1/4 Bryce Fleming
 1/5 Dorothy Bakke
 1/7 Colby Gustafson
 1/7 Kaitlin Hazelwood
 1/7 Karen Hoppe
 1/7 Emily Smith
 1/7 Sydney Toler
 1/8 Wyman Howard
 1/10 Sawyer Morales
 1/10 Sara Waskowicz
 1/11 Matthew Wszalek
 1/12 Suzanne Lawton
 1/13 Margaret Smith
 1/13 Nancy Velasquez
 1/14 Anne Caputo
 1/14 Renee DeMarco
 1/14 Suzy McQuilkin
 1/14 Betty Mills
 1/14 Kylie Payne
 1/15 Dorothee Arnold
 1/15 Luis Odria
 1/15 Peter Spencer
 1/16 Rose Hall
 1/17 Caroline Legere
 1/18 Cathy David

1/19 Jeannette Ovando
 1/21 Jane Barr
 1/21 Tom Donelson
 1/22 Dorothy Daniel
 1/22 Bill Eckel
 1/22 Chris Kupczyk
 1/22 Katherine Peck
 1/22 Teresa Scalzo
 1/22 Alison Smith
 1/23 Nat Ames
 1/23 Suzanne O'Malley
 1/24 Brennen Ruff
 1/24 Charles Winstead
 1/25 Lizzie Goodnow
 1/25 Michelle Searcy
 1/26 Tania Shand
 1/27 Robert Carpenter
 1/27 Kathryn Pattarini
 1/28 Nicholas Gentry
 1/28 Nora Gentry
 1/28 Lucy Medley
 1/29 Allison Knippen
 1/29 Avery Laboy
 1/29 Morgan Miller
 1/30 Henry Tazewell
 1/31 Anne Boris
 1/31 Sarah Gabbert
 1/31 Carys Henel
 1/31 Robert Steele



Parish Staff

Robert MalmRector
 (rector@gracealex.org)
 Leslie Steffensen Assistant to the Rector
 (assistant.rector@gracealex.org)
 Elizabeth Locher
 Assistant for Parish Life and Family Ministries
 (family.ministries@gracealex.org)
 Kyle Babin Director of Music
 (music.director@gracealex.org)
 Christine Byrnes Head of School
 (office@graceschoolalex.org)
 Ruth Young Children's Chapel Coordinator
 (ruth.young@gracealex.org)
 Charlotte Payne Wright Parish Administrator
 (parish.administrator@gracealex.org)
 Beth Wiggers Office Administrator
 (parish.office@gracealex.org)
 Pedro Hernandez Sexton
 Chandler Whitman Seminarian
 (chandler.whitman@gracealex.org)
 Joshua Messick Seminarian
 (josh.messick@gracealex.org)

Vestry

Class of 2013
 Peter Barnes Sr. Warden
 Deborah Crabtree Jr. Warden
 Bill Eckel Assistant Treasurer
 June Huber School Board
 Lee Meeks Member at Large

Class of 2014
 John Berry School Board
 Elizabeth Legere Stewardship
 Erica McFarquhar Treasurer
 Mai-Lan Smith Evangelism
 Kemp Williams Register, Worship

Class of 2015
 Eric Bonetti Fellowship
 Lisa Medley Youth
 Barbara Read Pastoral Care
 Mary Ann Ryan Outreach
 Eric Waskowicz Education

Alternate
 Teresa Preston Communications

Non-Vestry Coordinators
 Eugene Alford Stewardship
 Gary Carter Fellowship
 Chad Eckles Worship
 Kristine Hesse Communications
 Rich Kelly Youth
 Nancy Lorentz Education
 Cindy MacIntyre Evangelism
 Bill Malone Pastoral Care
 Andrea Santos TNT
 Tania Wilkes Outreach

CHRISTMAS AT GRACE CHURCH 2013

Christmas Pageant, December 15

5:00 PM Children's Christmas Pageant
followed by a pizza party and cookie feast in the Marrow Hall Auditorium

Christmas Eve, December 24

5:00 PM First Eucharist of Christmas with procession to the crèche. (Prelude at 4:30 PM)
*The Nursery will be available at 4:30 PM for children 2 years and under.
Children's Chapel will also start at 4:30 PM for those 3 years through kindergarten.*

7:30 PM Holy Eucharist (Prelude at 7:15 PM)

9:30 PM La Santa Eucaristía (In Auditorium)

10:30 PM Choral Prelude

11:00 PM Midnight Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord



Christmas Day, December 25

12:00 noon Festive Eucharist

There is no Child Care or Children's Chapel Christmas Day

Saint Stephen, December 26

12:15 PM Holy Eucharist

Saint John the Evangelist, December 27

12:15 PM Holy Eucharist

The First Sunday after Christmas, December 29

7:30 AM Holy Eucharist

9:00 AM La Santa Eucaristía (In Auditorium)

10:00 AM Lessons and Carols with Holy Communion

..... *The Nursery will be available at 9:45 AM for children kindergarten and younger.*

..... *There is no Children's Chapel today.*

5:00 PM Holy Eucharist



Feast of the Holy Name, January 1

12:00 noon Choral Eucharist

The Eve of the Epiphany of Christ, January 5

7:30 AM Holy Eucharist

9:00 AM Bilingual Eucharist with La Gracia

10:00 AM Fellowship Sunday; Brunch with a visit from the Three Kings; no classes

11:15 AM Festival Eucharist

5:00 PM Holy Eucharist