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GRACE NOTES

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April Theme: Were you there?



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From Our Rector



Dear Friends in Christ—

Were you there? My answer, too often, is no.

I am aware that for the past three years, I have often not been fully present. Not with Jesus, not with the people beloved to me, not with myself. The existential stress of the world—the pandemic, social and political upheaval, and widespread decline in mental health (especially among young people)—has colonized my mind and my heart.

You probably know that feeling of being here-but-not-here. The Rube Goldberg machine of my mind starts working with a thousand what-ifs and what-nexts. My attention goes to that mental space of anxiety and conditionality. I come to the end of the day and cannot remember what I ate for lunch or what the clouds in the sky looked like. My spine hurts from being hunched over.

My practice, this Lent, has been to cultivate presence. I want to be present with myself so that I can be present with God. As we draw toward Holy Week, such presence feels all the more urgent. Were you there? I want my answer to be yes.

I offer you these exhortations as you draw toward the transformative time of Holy Week and Easter:

- **Create space for God.** Seek solitude, especially if your life does not naturally provide it. Seek community, too, again especially if your life does not naturally provide it. Visit thin places in this beautiful creation. Come to church, too. The liturgy is purpose-built to create sacred space in this busy life.
- **Feel your feelings.** When life stills, our emotions rise to the surface. Often, these are emotions we don't want to feel—boredom, grief, resentment, shame, sadness, or anxiety. That's when most of us pick up our preferred anesthetic—often our phones, but perhaps alcohol or another compulsive behavior—because these things give us protective numbness. And so we never learn from those feelings, and we lose the ability to tolerate them. Put the screen down. Let the experience of the moment live in you.
- **Open your heart.** Most of us plan ahead as a necessary tool of adult life. But the Holy Spirit cannot be planned. Being present requires an uncomfortable availability to the unknown. We will never enter into mystery without surrendering to its strangeness and unpredictability.

I hope that we will each encounter God this season. If we do, it can change us, and change our church, and change the world we serve.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne +". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a plus sign at the end.

THE REV. DR. ANNE M. TURNER



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Grace Notes Submissions and Publication Schedule

Grace Notes is published ten times a year by Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia. All parishioners are encouraged to contribute articles and photos. The deadline is the fifteenth of the preceding month. Articles and photos should be emailed to grace.notes@gracealex.org and will be subject to editing. The Grace Notes team includes Joyce Ames, Kevin Hamilton, Diana Jarrett, and Liz Rugaber.



From Mother Nina

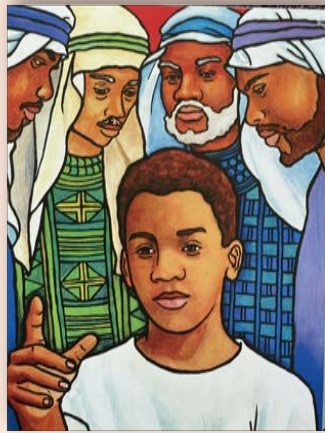
THE REV. NINA BACAS,
ASSOCIATE RECTOR & GRACE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

Children and Youth in the Season of Lent

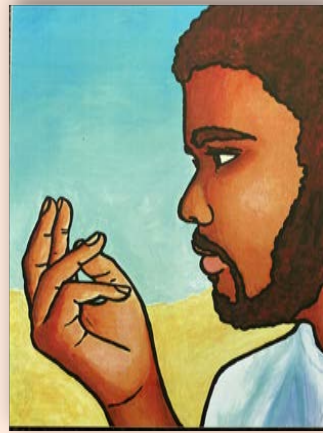
In children's and youth ministry, the season of Lent has been a season of prayerful activities, discernment, and service to others. In preschool through fifth grade Sunday School, children are experiencing "The Faces of Easter" in the Godly Play room. Using panels with the faces of Jesus, the story of Jesus is retold from birth to the Resurrection. After hearing the story, these Sunday Schoolers participate in outreach projects for families that come to the Grace Food Pantry.



Baby Jesus with
Mary and Joseph



Young Jesus with the Rabbis

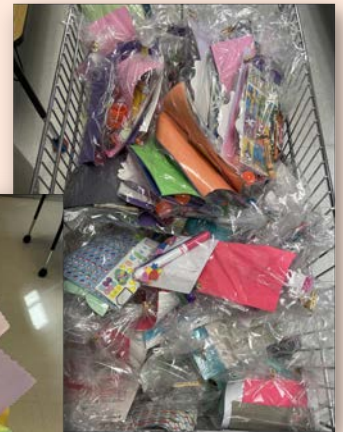


Jesus Alone



Outreach Project

After hearing the story of Jesus as a baby, our children assembled fleece stroller blankets for babies and toddlers. After hearing the story of Jesus as a twelve-year-old boy "lost" (by his parents) in the Temple, they assembled art kits for older children from craft donations. After hearing the story of adult Jesus in the desert without food for forty days and forty nights, they learned about food deserts in communities and bagged fresh fruit for Food Pantry families. Our children love working together to help others!



In the Wednesday evening Lenten series, children of various ages have gathered to work on Lent-to-Easter themed activities. On the first evening, we made a giant map of the journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter morning!



March was a special month for our J2A youth preparing for Confirmation. A group of ten youth and four adults went on a weekend discernment retreat at Shrine Mont. We played, hiked, walked the labyrinth, discussed spiritual questions and terminology, and worshipped every day. At the end of the weekend, these youth met with me privately and stated their intentions regarding Confirmation--i.e., saying "yes" to God all on their own. We all look forward to witnessing the Confirmation of this J2A group at the Easter Vigil!



On the Mind of Father Santi



THE REV. SANTI RODRIGUEZ,
ASSOCIATE RECTOR

"Were you there when the sun refused to shine?" *The Hymnal 1982 Companion* tells us that the beloved African-American spiritual predates the Civil War and was likely written by enslaved African Americans. First printed in 1899 in Barton's *Old Plantation Hymns*, it was included in the Episcopal Church hymnal in 1940. That made it the first spiritual to be included in a major American hymnal. While Episcopalians were an integral part of the social and economic system of slavery in America, the Episcopal Church has also been decisive in the work of inclusion and the struggle for racial justice. As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has reminded us multiple times, "Our long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus."

Let me share with you some of the ways we have committed ourselves to follow Jesus at Grace in the last month.

In Adult Formation, we committed to grow into a deeper relationship with the Living Christ. Our Sunday Adult Forums have provided us with opportunities to question our beliefs and share our stories of faith. Our Tuesday night Inquirer's Class (which I co-teach with Teresa Preston and Mother Amanda) has been a beautiful reminder of the power of telling our faith stories. It is quite moving to hear newcomers and ongoing seekers share the joys and hopes and the griefs and anxieties of their journeys of faith.

Our Wednesday Lenten Series has reminded us that we do not do this work alone. In partnership with the other ministries, we launched the series as an opportunity to explore different forms of listening to and listening for the Beloved. Just as in "Were You There?" we have been encouraged to identify with the

witnesses of Christ's life, death, and Resurrection, and to find our own ways to let Jesus' love transform us.

In Evangelism, we've committed to witness God's love in new ways. The highlight of our "witness" was the RELIC concert on February 17. Their Winter Oasis concert was an incredible experience for all who participated. We loved the music and the joy of the ensemble. I love the opportunity to invite and welcome others into our beautiful church. Opportunities like this help others to be truly curious and open to the Spirit as they encounter beauty and delight. This experiment in evangelism is one I hope we can build on. I look forward to partnering with Samantha Scheff, our Director of Music, and other ministries to invite people to discover more with God through art, music, and storytelling.

In Outreach, we have started a number of important conversations to pay closer attention to the work of Mrs. Holy Spirit among us, and to be truly present to the needs of the communities we serve. For me, the prayer that has been informing that conversation is the Collect for Mission: "Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen." *Book of Common Prayer*, page 101.

I pray that Holy Week and Easter will move us and empower us to continue reaching forth our hands in love. I pray that all our ministries continue to witness our commitment to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Get Social with Grace!

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facebook



facebook.com/
GraceEpiscopalChurchAlexandriaVa

Facebook Group



Grace Episcopal Church:
Members and Friends
(Alexandria, Virginia)

YouTube



Search for Grace Episcopal Church
Alexandria Virginia on YouTube.

Twitter



@graceepisalexva



Grace Episcopal School



**PATTI CULBRETH,
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Psalms 18:28 teaches, "You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light." Daylight saving time coinciding with the Easter Season is a great way to remind us of how God fills our lives with light.

His light shines in the students of Grace as we enter our final trimester. Spring promises more learning, more field trips, more community events, and more to celebrate. Our families will enjoy a restful Spring Break and then settle into the final weeks of school.

In the midst of our spring joy, we must also plan ahead for our new school year in 2023-2024. Our admissions cycle was a success, and we look forward to welcoming new families to join our current group for another wonderful year of Grace. We still have limited space in our preschool and junior kindergarten, so please send interested families our way at admissions@graceschoolalex.org.

Sunshine, smiles, and laughter: the light shines at Grace!





Notes from Sam

Holy Week Music Stats

I had a professor in college who deemed singing “an athletic activity for the small muscles.” Singers do exercise and strengthen their muscles just like athletes do; however, we’re primarily focused on smaller muscles used for vocal production and breathing. Nonetheless, singing can be an exhausting activity, and with Holy Week fast upon us I took a minute to contemplate the “stats” for the choir as we journey through this week together.

Between Palm Sunday and Easter the choir will:

- Spend over fifteen hours at Grace Church in rehearsals and services
- Sing ten anthems and over twenty-five hymns

Now I suppose if this were actually baseball, we would calculate things like accuracy and attendance into the overall rating, but this is one place where music is different from baseball. Our job is never just to sing accurately what is on the page but to help you have a more meaningful worship experience. We are all humans, and wrong notes and late arrivals happen. But ultimately every single choir member is a valued member of the team and is giving their all to help you have a wonderful journey through Holy Week. We look forward to seeing you at many of the services. And when you see a member of the choir, be sure to give them a hearty thank-you for all their hard work and dedication.



Campus Matters



ROBBY SCHRUM,
JUNIOR WARDEN

Lent is coming to a close, and Easter is rapidly approaching. Soon we’ll have the time and space to undertake a few projects to repair and improve Grace’s physical plant.

We’ll be working to repair the church sign outside the old narthex doors where we post our various service times. For much of the past few years, the sign has been covered with a banner notifying passersby of opportunities for online and in-person worship. It was damaged during a recent windstorm. The newly repaired sign will include details on our five Sunday services. The old sign needs an update, as the schedule of services is different than it was pre-pandemic!

Two other projects are in motion.

First, we’ll soon contract with a specialist to rehabilitate the cab in the elevator outside the church office. Stay tuned for more information about when that work will take place and any potential service disruptions.

Second, the church and school will partner on a water mitigation project on the façade of Merrow Hall that faces the parking lot. We intend to begin work after the school year finishes.

As always, please contact me if you see anything related to Grace’s physical plant that needs attention – robby.schrum@gracealex.org.

BEHIND THE SCENES



KEVIN HAMILTON,
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATION



5,223: that is the number of steps I have taken so far according to my Fitbit, and it is still morning. I've walked the building a couple of times today for various reasons, and I have already racked up a little over half of my daily goal of 10,000 steps.

When I had my initial interview for my position here at Grace, I remember pulling up to the church and thinking, "What a charming little church." It wasn't until I took a complete tour of the building that I realized the church, while indeed charming, is by no means little!

3601 Russell Road is a unique property, as its design is warm and inviting but doesn't immediately convey its size from the road. Step into the nave as brilliant colors dance on the stone and wood when sunlight refracts through stunning stained glass. Step out just a few feet from there and you will find updated and clean offices for the clergy and meeting spaces where people learn in community together and deepen their faith. Around the corner you will find spacious and updated classrooms, just beyond our newly renovated Godly Play room.

Go up a story and find additional meeting spaces and an auditorium that allows for a host of fellowship events, the occasional Grace School assembly, and a weekly gathering for people in recovery. Find your way back to the first floor and there are parish administrative offices, more meeting spaces, vesting rooms, a choir room, a newly renovated nursery, and additional classrooms that provide a first-class educational experience through Grace Episcopal School.

When you are done, and if you aren't too tired, head out to the back of the property to find an amphitheater where little ones and their families will gather for Little Church as the weather warms. While out there, don't forget to look around at the beautiful grounds, a gift of God's beauty.

A campus as large as this one is well beyond the care of a single person or ministry. The care of the property that God has entrusted to Grace requires that we work together to ensure the space is clean and in good repair, and that we are mindful of both natural and financial resources.

Looking for ideas on how you can help care for our campus? Here are a few mentioned by various parishioners and ministry team volunteers.

- **See a building issue that may need addressing? Let us know!**

Sometimes we may think that something we see must already be on the radar of the office or Junior Warden, but in a facility this size that may not be the case. Please email us if there is something you see that needs attention. Note that non-emergency issues may take some time to address, depending on maintenance schedules.

- **When leaving an empty room, flip the switch.**

It seems like a simple step, but if we all turn off the lights in non-occupied spaces, we will help ensure we are being good stewards of utilities. The same is true of double-checking faucets to ensure water is turned off.

- **Does a ministry you are a part of have storage space in the building that could use a little TLC and perhaps a purge of some items?**

Consider talking to the ministry lead about members getting together to do a little spring cleaning. Many hands make light work, and cleaning can actually be fun when done with others.

- **Contact the office before donating furniture or other household items.**

We may have a surplus of various types of furniture or may not have a need for certain items right now. Please contact the church office prior to bringing donations to ensure we are not creating additional storage concerns.

These are just a few suggestions of how we can help with the upkeep of our campus. And we haven't even touched on the grounds or the work of our "gardening angels," but perhaps we'll revisit that in a future article.

Diocesan News



by Doug Prince

Bishop Stevenson Meets Churches of the Alexandria Region

On February 28, representatives from all eight churches in the Alexandria Region welcomed newly ordained Bishop E. Mark Stevenson for lunch and fellowship at the Church of the Resurrection. The Church of the Resurrection is adjacent to Goodwin House Alexandria and has recently transformed its property, partnering with AHC, Inc., to build The Spire, an apartment dwelling with 113 affordable housing units.

After lunch, the Bishop opened with a reading from Genesis as a segue to his mission to expand communications and discipleship within the Diocese of Virginia. (Subsequently, on March 2, he announced that he has engaged two consultants to further that ministry, as detailed below.)

The Bishop conveyed his strong admiration of and confidence in the Diocesan staff, stating that he had been managing people since he was eighteen years old, and this was by far one of the best groups of people he had ever worked with. He emphasized that he wanted his Episcopate not to be known as the Mark Stevenson Episcopate, but rather as our Episcopate, noting that he greatly enjoys being in the field rather than behind a desk, and that there is so much energy to put into action. He then opened the floor to all lay and clergy delegates in the room, and each took a turn highlighting parish programs, successes, challenges, and hopes.

From Grace, Mother Nina, Father Santi, Liz Rugaber, and Doug Prince were present. The Bishop jokingly asked Liz to come with him on the road after she talked about what was happening at Grace and how we live our faith. Mother Nina mentioned the recent two-part regional event involving Grace, Christ Church, and St. Paul's that brought together more than thirty-five youth for an evening of dinner, games, and a mission activity assembling eighty-five treat bags. The bags, which included the Christmas Eve Creche offerings as well as fun pens, notebooks, snacks, lip balm, and lotion, were later distributed to Casa Chirilagua children at a community dinner—served by the regional youth and others—at the end of January (see Mother Nina's article in the February issue of Grace Notes). Grace's delegates also spoke of our Beloved Community work and improving communications.

Other delegates highlighted their work in eviction prevention and Afghan refugee resettlement, Christ Church's celebration of its 250th anniversary, alleviating hunger through their food programs, installation of solar panels, and other anti-poverty work. The Bishop noted that food, shelter, and economic insecurity are all interconnected with Beloved Community work and that he wished for every Episcopalian to live and breathe every moment through that lens as we work toward building a community akin to the Garden before sin. It was a moving event, and it was clear that the gospel imperative is alive through the leadership of our clergy and lay persons.

Bishop Stevenson will be visiting Grace for the Easter Vigil on April 8.



Bishop Stevenson Is Serious About Increasing Diocesan Communications and Engagement

(Reprinted with some editing from the Diocesan e-Communiqué on March 2, 2023. [Sign up here](#) to receive Diocesan e-Communiqués in your inbox.)

Bishop E. Mark Stevenson announced today that he has engaged the expertise of two consultants to help the Diocese of Virginia expand its ministry in the areas of communications and discipleship.

Easton Davis

Easton Davis, Canon for Communications and Digital Evangelism in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, will lead a comprehensive assessment of all diocesan communications, both external and internal, and communications among congregations of the Diocese. Easton will work with the Bishop and communications staff to inventory current communications, evaluate those efforts, survey key audience groups in the Diocese, and make recommendations for new communications opportunities.

Heidi Kim

Bishop Stevenson has engaged Heidi Kim to assist in his search for a Canon for Formation and Discipleship. Heidi is a lay leader and church consultant engaged in ministries of racial healing and reconciliation, conflict transformation, organization development, and cultural change. She served as the Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation on the Presiding Bishop's staff for five years. Heidi will help the Diocese develop a profile and conduct a nationwide search to identify the Diocese's first Canon for Formation and Discipleship.

Alexandria Episcopal Region's Outreach Allocations

The following is the Outreach Committee Report from Betsy Faga of the Alexandria Region. The Regional Outreach Committee allocates almost all the contributions made by churches and individuals throughout the eight member churches back into church outreach programs.

In 2022, the Alexandria Region allocated \$5,600 to collaboratively fund three outreach programs.

The Christ Church Lazarus Ministry continued to operate remotely with eleven counselors assisting Alexandria residents five days a week from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. The program is led by Melanie Gray, Director of Outreach for Christ Episcopal Church, and her able staff.

In 2022, Christ Church Lazarus Ministry counselors answered 1,368 calls over fifty weeks and provided over \$468,000 in financial assistance. Over half of these funds went to rental assistance, focused on helping prevent evictions. The ministry prevented sixty-eight evictions. The Afghan Refugee Ministry has served seventy families since it began in 2016 and currently has twenty-eight active families being shepherded by teams of volunteers. The Region provided \$2,600 to the Lazarus Ministry to prevent one eviction and \$1,000 for the Refugee Ministry and the Christ Church Lazarus Ministry, with the funds to be split between the two ministries as Ms. Gray saw fit.

The Meade Memorial Bag Lunch ministry is supported by volunteers from seven churches who bag lunches to serve 75-125 people Monday to Friday from 11:30-1:30. On Wednesday a generous donation of groceries is received from ALIVE. The groceries are packaged the same day and distributed Thursday and Friday. A \$1,000 donation from the Alexandria Region is used for utility costs, plumbing needs, and cleanup.

Because of its location in the Arlandria Chirilagua area, Grace Church has significantly increased its food distribution. Distribution takes place Tuesdays and Fridays, and they continue to serve about 300 families a week with food and non-food personal items. They receive funds from the City and support from other parishes, communities, and individuals. The Alexandria Region contributed \$1,000.



THE REV. SANTI RODRIGUEZ,
ASSOCIATE RECTOR

¿Presenciaste la Muerte del Señor?

Father Santi reflects on the spirituality of the African-American spiritual, "Were You There?"

El himno espiritual "Were You There / ¿Presenciaste la Muerte del Señor?", fue posiblemente escrito por afroamericanos esclavizados antes de la Guerra Civil Americana (1861-65). El himno nos invita a identificarnos con los testigos de la muerte y la resurrección de Cristo. Es una invitación que nos convoca al Calvario a contemplar a Jesús sobre la cruz. Eliminadas las distancias geográficas y temporales, nos convertimos en testigos de su sufrimiento y de su gran amor por nosotros.

Los invito a contemplar conmigo la pasión de Cristo.

Viernes Santo. Nos estacionamos con María, Madre de Jesús y Madre nuestra, al pie de la cruz. Fijamos la mirada en aquel que fue traspasado, pidiéndole que nos ayude a reflexionar en el misterio de su vida y de su muerte. Nuestro deber es morar en su corazón, permanecer a sus pies en actitud de escucha y contemplación.

Prepara tu corazón. Ponte a los pies del árbol de la vida. Usa tu imaginación para contemplar a Jesús en la cruz, para contemplar su amor eucarístico, su amor crucificado derramado por el bien de un mundo que sufre. Mira cómo hace nuevas todas las cosas. Cierra los ojos por un momento y contempla a Jesús en la cruz. Usa tus sentidos espirituales para experimentar los acontecimientos en el Calvario. Deja que Jesús ocupe todos tus sentidos.

He aquí a Jesús en la cruz. Mira al Señor condenado, que se dejó clavar en la cruz. Contempla su rostro, sus heridas y su corazón traspasado. Mira alrededor. He aquí los que están alrededor de Jesús. Mira a los soldados, las autoridades religiosas, los espectadores. Mira a los bandidos crucificados. Mira a María, a Juan, a Simón de Cirene y a María Magdalena.

Siente el viento frío que sopla en el Gólgota. Quitate las sandalias, porque estás parado en tierra santa. Siente la tierra bajo tus pies. ¿Es áspero o suave? ¿Hay parches de hierba?

Abraza a María, la fiel compañera de la cruz. Siente el calor de su abrazo. ¿Cómo se siente consolar a María? ¿Cómo te consuela ella?

Venera a Jesús en la cruz. Toca la cruz. Besa los pies de Jesús. ¿Qué se agita en tu corazón al venerar al Señor Crucificado?

Huele la madera de la cruz. Huele el aroma de la tierra en la cima del 'Lugar de la Calavera'. La tierra puede oler un poco salina. Quédate con ese olor por un momento. El viento sopla. Una tormenta está en camino. ¿A qué huele el viento antes de la lluvia?

¿Qué amargo es ver a nuestro amado en esa cruz? ¿A qué sabe ese amargor? ¿A qué te supo la madera de la cruz cuando la besaste? ¿Puedes saborear tus propias lágrimas?

Escucha a las personas que te rodean. ¿Qué están diciendo? Escucha las bromas de los soldados y las burlas de los sumos sacerdotes. Atiende a los gritos del pueblo alrededor de la cruz. Escucha a los que lloran. Oye las últimas palabras de Jesús. ¿Con quién está hablando? ¿Cómo se conmueve tu corazón cuando Cristo habla desde el púlpito de la cruz?

"Padre, perdónalos, porque no saben lo que hacen" (Lucas 23:34). ¿Cómo necesitas experimentar el perdón de Dios en tu vida hoy? Diselo a Jesús. ¿Cómo te está mirando?

"Te aseguro que hoy estarás conmigo en el paraíso" (Lucas 23:43). ¿Confías en que estarás con él en el paraíso cuando llegue el momento?

"Mujer, aquí tienes a tu hijo" (Juan 19:26). Aquí está tu hijo. Aquí está tu hija. ¿Qué te evoca la presencia de María en la cruz? Dile a ella. ¿Cómo responde ella a tus palabras?

"Dios mío, Dios mío, ¿por qué me has abandonado?" (Marcos 15:34). ¿También te sientes abandonado? ¿Cómo puedes consolar a Jesús?

"Tengo sed" (Juan 19:28). ¿Cómo respondes a estas palabras? ¿De qué tienes sed?

"Todo está terminado" (Juan 19:30). ¿Confías en que Dios terminará lo que ha comenzado en ti?

"Padre, en tus manos encomiendo mi espíritu" (Lc 23,46).

Termina tu oración confiando tu vida al Señor. Pídele al Señor que te ayude a entrar en esa paz que consiste en poner tu vida en sus manos. Dale gracias por permitirte ser un testigo de su amor y su sacrificio sobre la cruz.

A Day in the Life of ... Father Santi

A series inviting Grace parishioners into an average workday of Grace Church staff

Growing up I always wanted to know what a priest did all day. And now I know because I am one.

Every day is different, but weekdays typically begin at 5:00 am. My wife is also a priest, and while she gets up to pray and do yoga (before heading to the National Cathedral School where she serves as a chaplain), I begin my day with a walk or a jog with one of our dogs. Running is my happy place. It's also my workshop for sermon prep.

Back home by 6:30 am, I listen to a podcast, brew a strong cup of coffee, and break my fast with a protein shake. If I'm really hungry, I rock the eggs and peanut butter toast. After a quick shower, I play the "What Shall I Wear Today?" game: I guess I'll go with the black pants and...the black shirt!

I then drive my son to school. This is time well-spent connecting with him about some of the things we love. I drop him off at school and arrive at Grace by 8:00 am. I like to begin my "workday" with prayer in my favorite spot in our beautiful church: the first pew in front of Our Lady's Altar. Praying next to Mama Mary and in front of the Reserved Sacrament is just a great way to start my workday. It's the way that God charges my day. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, your clergy say Morning Prayer together at 9:05!

Back in my office, I work on projects in ninety-minute blocks of time. The typical workday can include preparing for a class, creating social media posts, meeting with a parishioner, celebrating the Eucharist, visiting someone in the hospital, and following up on a project related to outreach or evangelism. Monday is a strategy and big projects day. Tuesday is my main day for pastoral care visits. Wednesday is our main staff meeting and worship prep day. Thursday is usually a diocesan day: standing committee, peer cohort, and diocesan projects. Friday is usually my day off. Saturday is easy: some last-minute worship and sermon prep. Sunday is for worship and all things Grace.

The priesthood is anything but boring. I love that becoming a priest doesn't mean leaving behind what I'm passionate about. I get to chat with people about the intersection of pop culture and spirituality--things like *Star Wars* & Baptism, *The Lord of the Rings* & parenting, and Metallica & funeral planning. Some days, I head to a city council meeting to support a housing project and then meet a newcomer for coffee to talk about angels and demons. Other days, I get to accompany a couple planning their wedding, and follow that up with a pastoral visit with someone who was recently diagnosed with a serious illness. I get to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Most days, I get home between four and five. While my son is starting on homework, I have some time for myself: I meditate, get another workout, and catch up with my personal emails and social media. Meditation is perhaps the most important part of that block: I find that five or ten minutes of meditation is very helpful for avoiding anxiety and coping with stress. That is the reset button of my evening.

We have dinner as a family around 6:00 pm. If I do not have to jump on a Zoom meeting or head back to church for a class or a church event, my wife and I catch up or watch a TV show together. The last things I do before going to bed depend on the day: journaling, calling one of my parents and siblings, or reading. Then, it's time for a quick shower and my night prayers: usually the Examen of Consciousness, sometimes Compline. It's 9:45 pm: bedtime.

Growing up I always wanted to know what a priest did all day. And now I know that priests are not so different from everyone else. We all want to enjoy the little things, be fully present to those around us, and count our blessings.



Holy Week & Easter Sunday @ Grace

Palm Sunday with Procession, April 2

7:30 am - Holy Eucharist

8:45 am - La Santa Eucaristía (*en español*)*

9:00 am - Little Church for our Youngest*

9:30 am - Palm Cross Activity for all ages

10:30 am - Choral Eucharist*

(with Children's Chapel and Livestreamed)

5:00 pm - Holy Eucharist

Choral Tenebrae Wednesday, April 5

7:00 pm - Choral Tenebrae lead by our choir
and Sam Scheff, Director of Music
(Livestreamed)

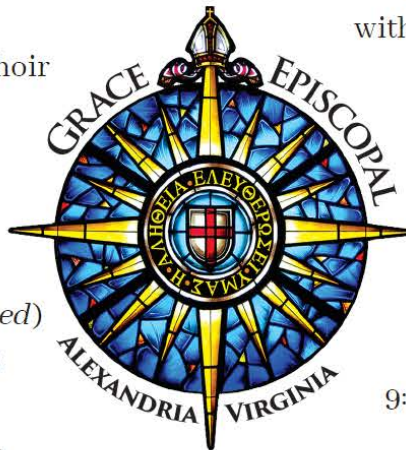
Good Friday, April 7

7:00 am - Liturgy of the Day (Livestreamed)

12:00 - 3:00 pm - Stations of the Cross
(Livestreamed) & Liturgy of the Day

6:00 pm - Children's & Family Service

7:00 pm - Viacrucis (*en español*)



Holy Eucharist,

Monday, April 3 & Tuesday, April 4

7:00 pm - Contemplative Eucharist
on Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week

Maundy Thursday, April 6

Noon - Healing Service with Eucharist

7:00 pm - Maundy Thursday Choral Eucharist
with foot-washing and stripping of the altar
(Livestreamed)

All Night Prayer Watch follows

Liturgy of the Day Saturday, April 8

9:00 am - Holy Saturday Liturgy of the Day
(with prayers for those who mourn)

Easter Vigil with Bishop Mark Stevenson Saturday, April 8

8:00 pm - Easter Vigil with Confirmations* (Livestreamed)

Agape potluck meal will follow in the Auditorium



Easter Sunday, April 9

6 am Sunrise Service by the Potomac River

7:30 am - Holy Eucharist

8:45 am - La Santa Eucaristía (*en español*)*

9:00 am - Children's & Family Service*

9:45 am Easter Egg Hunt (5th grade & under)*

10:30 am - Festival Eucharist* (Livestreamed)

No 5 pm Service on Easter Day



*Nursery Care Provided

Opinion: Youth Perspective



The Food Pantry and The People It Serves

Annie Eason | J2A and Grace Church Food Pantry Volunteer

Established in the 1980s, Grace Episcopal Church Food Pantry (GCFP) is an organization that most parishioners have probably heard of. The work of GCFP routinely involves several steps. First, a group of volunteers unloads food and other items from suppliers. Then, GCFP volunteers bag various food and household items, such as canned tomatoes, pancake mix, toilet paper, and diapers. Then, a new group of volunteers comes in and gives the bags to needy members of our community. These volunteer sessions usually last no more than two hours and occur in the afternoons at Grace every day except Sunday. According to volunteer Lynn Rohrs, the bags act as a supplement for families.

Donating a bit of your time to serve a struggling community is not only important, but also fulfilling for both the volunteer and the client. I recall once when I was volunteering, a mother and her children came to Grace and asked us if she could receive food. She said that she hadn't gone to Grace in a while and had to travel by bus. She arrived early, not knowing that distribution was scheduled for later in the day. We, of course, helped her and gave her a bag of food, along with extra bonus items and some snacks for the children. I remember how grateful she was, and I felt proud that I could help someone put food on the table.

While I had volunteered many times before this happened and understood how GCFP helped people and why they needed the food in the first place, seeing how my actions directly contributed to good things really made it clear to me that volunteering at the Food Pantry is something that is not only necessary, but also the right thing to do.

More GCFP volunteers are needed to keep up with the increased demand caused by inflation and ongoing poverty. So, why should you volunteer at the Food Pantry? I believe volunteer Alex Willson said it perfectly: "I think it [GCFP] is doing what a church is supposed to do. . . Jesus said, 'Feed the sheep,' and that's what . . . Grace does; it lives out what we're supposed to do, what Christ asked us to do."

Volunteering is also a good form of exercise, and sessions are only two hours, with three or four volunteers to chat with. Bagging especially isn't too hard, though if you know some Spanish, handing out the food would also be good. It's also an incredible way to get service hours; I have around seventy-five hours just from volunteering there. GCFP needs many more volunteers and regular donations to keep up with the demand for food. If you'd like to contribute to something amazing, please try signing up for a volunteer time-slot at LotsaHelpingHands.com and search for "Grace food pantry." I hope learning more about the people that GCFP serves motivates you to volunteer to help them and their families.



Volunteers preparing for food distribution on March 31, 2020.



Bags full of food.
This was posted on April 25, 2022.

Food Pantry Stats: Then & Now

2018 (pre-Covid):

- Clients visited GCFP once a month and were logged in (name, address, and number in household), received a bag of food, and selected up to three "bonus items" like toiletries and cleaning supplies. The monthly tally of client visits was then reported to the Capital Area Food Bank.
- GCFP distributed 1,513 bags of food to families (3,501 adults and 3,365 children).
- GCFP purchased 25,629 pounds of food from the Capital Area Food Bank.
- Two volunteers worked at each distribution.

2022 (pandemic):

- GCFP is open Tuesdays and Fridays (6:00-7:30pm). Client names and number in household are recorded but are not reported to CAFB. Clients are given a bag of food, bonus items, healthy snacks for children, and baby diapers (as needed).
- GCFP distributed 13,913 bags of food to families (33,323 adults and 29,331 children).
- GCFP purchased 119,672 pounds of food from the Capital Area Food Bank.
- Six volunteers and one supervisor (Power Volunteer) work at each distribution.

Thanks to Judy Willard, Alex Willson, Lynn Rohrs, and Jennifer Pease for contributions to this article.

Editor's Note: Annie wrote a well-researched history of Chirilagua that provides important context for the development of the area and the current needs of its residents. If you would like a copy, please send your request to grace.notes@gracealex.org.

Vestry View

BILL MALONE,
SENIOR WARDEN



What's Amazing About Grace?

Easter brings an excitement, not only to the church, but to the wider culture, in a way rivaled only by Christmas. It doesn't hurt that Easter coincides with spring and nature waking up from winter's cold.

I feel like this Lent, Holy Week, and Easter have a special meaning, as they have had the last few years during the pandemic. In many ways, we are thawing from a time that left us feeling cold, isolated, and with a sense of darkness. Now that we are no longer in that moment of crisis, we are gaining enough confidence to show ourselves again in the world.

But the world we've come back to is different—probably in ways that will take a long time to figure out. I still have a general sense that we all want to cling to some of those things that made us feel safe—an attachment to the comforts of being at home, in a smaller circle, shrinking our exposure to the world.

As a parish, we are healing together. But we also owe it to the world to live into a call that is courageous, confident, and perhaps even a little risky. Why? Because I believe that for everything wrong with the world right now, there's still something right about Grace. Where our nation faces division, we bring news of reconciliation; where the culture feeds on resentment, we bear the gift of gratitude; and in a time of deep cynicism about what institutions can offer, we shine brightly as a community built on hope and trust.

As I've looked around during worship and fellowship this year, I've seen people filled with God's spirit. And God's heart is big enough to sustain not only us, but anyone who might come through our doors.

This spring, consider whom you could invite to Grace. Not for the sake of the church, but for the sake of your friends and neighbors, who I am confident deeply need to experience for themselves all that's right with Grace.

Sincerely,

Bill Malone

malone.bill@gmail.com





JUNE HUBER

Grace-ful Worship

Were You There?

The first thing that popped into my head when I learned the theme of this month's newsletter was Hymn 172, "Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)." It's one of my favorite hymns, usually sung (as I remember it) on--or very near--Good Friday. I write "favorite" not in the sense that it makes me feel good, as my favorites usually do, but in the sense that it makes me FEEL--in this case, a feeling of grief.

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side? Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?*

I did a bit of research and learned that the hymn was first published in 1899 in William Eleazar Barton's *Old Plantation Hymns* (subtitled *A Collection of Hitherto Unpublished Melodies of the Slave and the Freedman, with Historical and Descriptive Notes*). In 1940 it was included in the Episcopal Church hymnal, making it the first spiritual to be included in any major American hymnal. Apparently, it's also unique in that it is the only African-American song included in the Catholic Church's Liturgy of the Hours. "Were You There" tells the story of Jesus' Crucifixion. It's also a metaphor, likening Jesus' suffering to the suffering of slaves. I can easily imagine that slaves would see a suffering Jesus as someone whose predicament was like their own. Probably for this reason, there were many more spirituals about the death of Jesus than about his birth.

The hymn asks us, "Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?" Replacing Jesus' cross with a tree even further strengthens the connection between Jesus' suffering and slaves' suffering because of the reality of lynchings. Black Americans, from the antebellum period through the Jim Crow era, would have drawn their own connection between Jesus nailed to a tree and the frightening prevalence of lynchings in their own communities.

This similarity between a slave's own experience and that of Jesus is strengthened by the direct question: "Were You There?" The use of the second-person pronoun "you" reflects the sense of community of all Black slaves in the face of oppression. I learned that this particular hymn, and the use of the second-person perspective, also reflects the Christian principle that all humanity--past, present, and future--bears responsibility for the many sins of mankind that resulted in the Crucifixion.

Last but not least, I learned that Howard Thurman's 1979 autobiography, *With Head and Heart*, tells us that this hymn was one of Mahatma Gandhi's favorites. I've always been a big fan of Gandhi and loved the way Ben Kingsley portrayed him in the 1982 film.

Thoughts from Our Seminarian

DURANGO JENKINS



As we continue through Lent into Easter, I would like to offer up one more chance for learning this season. Easter focuses on the Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. We are promised that the dead shall be resurrected on the last day. (1 Cor. 15:52) We have spent Lent discussing and reflecting on our own mortality. Now we turn to our hope of new life in Christ.

We began our three-part course on Dying, Death, and Resurrection on March 28, but there are two more sessions left, and it's not too late to join the conversation. Our next session, on April 12 at 7pm, will be about death. We will discuss both the practical concerns about tending to and taking care of a dead body and the Christian understanding of death. Then, on April 19 at 7pm, we will shift our attention to resurrection and discuss how we live on, both in our theology and in how we take care of our earthly goods.

Finally, a bonus session! On April 23, after the 10:30 service, there will be a funeral planning luncheon! We will gather together, listen to music, and plan our funerals. It might seem morbid, but all the clergy I know say that leaving a complete funeral plan is one of the biggest gifts you can leave your family.

I look forward to seeing you all soon!



Upcoming Adult Forum Schedule

Sunday Mornings 9:40 - 10:15 AM
St. Mark Room and Virtually on Zoom

Tea and coffee are available from 9:30 just outside the St. Mark room.
Come and chat before we get started!

April 2: Palm Cross Activity - no separate adult forum

April 9: Easter Sunday - no adult forum

April 16: Shrine Mont, presented by Kirk Gibson

April 23: Aging Gracefully: Sharing Our Stories, led by Rev. Pierce Klemmt

April 30: TBA

Grace Goes on Mission Again!

For many years, the Grace Church EYC and its adult leaders have gone on mission trips, traveling to places from New York City in 2004 to New Orleans; Scottsboro, Alabama; Wise County, Virginia; Little Egg Harbor, New Jersey; and Clendenin, West Virginia--places hit by hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and with struggling economies. Our last EYC mission trip went to Rose Hill, North Carolina, in July 2019. Then Covid brought us to a full stop in 2020.

We are starting again, with a Grace adult-youth mission team. Our team will participate in National Rebuilding Day on April 29, joining a multitude of other congregations, businesses, and organizations in our area. Each team will be assigned a home or building needing repairs that can be accomplished in one day. National Rebuilding Day will happen across the nation under the sponsorship of Rebuilding Together, Inc. We expect to be given a house based on our skill levels. And we won't know our skill levels until we recruit a team!

Veterans from our EYC mission trips have already stepped up: Rich Kelly, Dan Pattarini, and Eric Waskowicz will lead the Grace team. Our goal is a team of ten to fifteen--enough to do serious repairs in one day. All parishioners are welcome, but with a special appeal to youth over age fourteen and recent newcomers to Grace. If we get more than fifteen volunteers, we'll just sort it out!

If this mission teamwork appeals to you--i.e., helping a needy neighbor--please email John Berry at kpbjab@yahoo.com. He will keep a roster of volunteers and the date of their email. To learn more about Rebuilding Together, go to their website: <https://rebuildingtogether-aff.org>. John can be reached at 703-486-6833.





Barbara Morris

An Occasional WORD



Photo Credit: Canva.com

Ten years ago, when my husband and I went to Israel, we visited two tombs, both of which claimed to be the tomb of Jesus--the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City and the garden tomb near the Damascus Gate. Our first stop was the tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Beautiful as the shrine was, it was a disappointment to us. Surging crowds of worshippers elbowed their way to the narrow doorway of the tomb. Candle smoke spiraled in the dim, flickering light, and mists of incense spiced the air. We had just two minutes to peek into the small tomb. The scene was vastly different from our expectations: the rough stone on which Jesus had been laid was covered with a marble lid. A religious fresco decorated one wall. A shelf was crowded with flowers, candles, and incense sticks. It was impossible to summon a spiritual feeling amid so many decorations and chattering, pushing mobs. When we escaped to the fresh air, I felt sad relief.

We had higher hopes later in the day when, cooled by the long shadows of cypress trees, we visited the garden that contained the tomb of a wealthy Jew, Joseph of Arimathea, who, with permission from Pilate, buried Jesus in his own tomb.

We were immediately impressed by the quiet beauty of the garden, which is actually a well-tended park with narrow paths winding through stands of trees and bushes on several terraced levels constructed of rough-hewn stones. Scattered throughout the garden, large pottery pots of flowers added pops of color to the green and stone-grey scene. Under the trees, on simple wooden benches, a few people sat quietly, their heads bowed over bibles.

The tomb, in a corner of the garden, was hewn from a huge rock wall. About thirty feet high, its craggy face was softened by tufts of wild grasses sprouting from scattered niches. The "doorway" of the tomb, cut from the rock, was shadowy, but inviting in its simplicity. The tomb of Jesus. We walked slowly toward it, spellbound and serene. Shortly, we were in the tomb. When our eyes adjusted to the dim light of a few candles, we saw the plain, unadorned stone slab where Jesus' battered body had lain. Both of us---we shared our thoughts later--experienced a deeply still and breathless moment. For the four or five minutes that we stood there, I was most strongly struck by a sense of emptiness, not by an image of Jesus on the stone slab. For he was not dead. The tomb was empty. The Lord had risen.

That simple tomb in the quiet garden was a comforting symbol of life, of hope.

To this day, when we celebrate the miracle of Easter, I recall that empty tomb and the garden through which Jesus walked after His Resurrection. And I smile. The memory awakens me to the overwhelming love of God and recalls the wonderful old hymn that proclaims, "He is risen, He is risen...let the whole wide world rejoice." (Hymn 180, *The Hymnal* 1982)

Calling All Volunteers! GCFP Needs Food Unloading Team Help

More Muscle Needed On Wednesdays

Get a great workout without joining a gym!

Meet New Friends • Make a Difference • Help Your Community

CAFB Driver delivers non-perishable cases of food to GCFP on Wednesday mornings.



Food Unloading Team shelves cases of food in designated areas as noted by PowerVolunteer (PV). After food is shelved, diapers and other items are bagged until the end of the shift.



Food Unloading Team Shifts are Wednesdays 2:00-4:00 pm. Team checks CAFB delivery inventory and unloads pallets onto carts. Some heavy lifting is required.

Sign Up on LotsaHelpingHands.com Today

LotsaHelpingHands.com

Need doesn't take a Vacation, a Spring Break, or a Time Out. Help others. Change lives. Volunteer at Grace Church Food Pantry (GCFP). It'll be the most rewarding after-school activity you'll do!

Calling All J2A & EYC Youth!

- Are you 16 or older? Speak Spanish?
- Need community service hours?
- Want to help others and change lives?

The Grace Church Food Pantry needs You!

VOLUNTEER

- Sign up @ LotsaHelpingHands.com
- Choose your task and hourly shift
- Get community service credit

<https://my.lotsahelpinghands.com/community/grace-episcopal-church/home>

GCFP continues to be a source of FOOD and HOPE for our Alexandria neighbors in need. Be a part of it.

Why Grace?

By Rushad L. Thomas



The Lord loves me. Wrapping my head around this basic reality is the primary mission of my life. I love the Lord, but my love is limited: I am human. His love is infinite, because he is love itself. Mind-blowing, isn't it?

I give my assent to the basic truths of our faith: God is the father and creator of the world; his son, Jesus Christ, is our savior and redeemer; the Holy Ghost has been poured into us to give us strength and inspiration as we walk the path of life. Nonetheless, my walk with the Lord is woefully imperfect. I make mistakes. I am slothful in prayer. I break our baptismal vows on a regular basis. Quite frankly, I am a mess.

That's why I need the Lord. And I need the Church. I need the sacraments of the new covenant (especially the Eucharist). I need to hear sermons (even though I hate sermons). I need the daily office, I need the rosary. I need the scriptures. I need Grace parishioners asking me to volunteer for stuff (you know who you are, and I love you).



Rushad Thomas at Grace's Altar



Khacki and John Berry with Rushad

Through prayer, worship, fellowship, and service, Grace, more than any house of worship I have ever attached myself to, gives me the encounter with the Lord and community that I need to live my life to the fullest. I have grown as a man and as a Christian since I attended my first 11:15 Choral Eucharist on Sunday, April 30, 2017. Grace isn't a perfect parish, but to me it comes about as close as you can get on this side of the veil. I thank God for the blessing of Grace in my life, and it is my sincere hope that I can be a blessing to Grace in whatever way I can, for as long as I can.

Hopefully, in the end my imperfect love will come to reflect God's perfect love just a little bit. If so, great credit will go to my Grace family for giving me an experience of the Christian walk that is serious and rigorous, yet also light and uplifting (and a whole lotta fun!). May Jesus Christ be praised.

"Cast each false idol from its throne, the Lord is God, and he alone: to God all praise and glory." (Hymn 408, The Hymnal 1982)



Rushad with Mary Hix



Rushad with Bishop Susan Goff and the Rev. Dr. Anne Turner



Linda Waskowicz with Rushad



Family Fun Page

Labyrinth

Labyrinths are usually large enough for people to walk on as they pray to help them focus their mind on God. The labyrinth below is not big enough to walk on, but you can trace it with your finger (or a crayon). Try it first to just get through it, and then try it again as you think about a prayer you may want to pray to God. One type of prayer you can pray using this labyrinth is a prayer of thanksgiving; every time your finger traces a turn, name something you are thankful for.



Our Mission



To Love, Proclaim, and Serve God

through

† life-giving liturgical worship

† joyful community

† empowering others

Nuestra Misión

Estamos llamados a amar,
proclamar, y servir a Dios

a través de

† adoración que da vida

† comunidad llena de alegría

† ofreciendo una mano al prójimo





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Vestry Class of 2023

Carlos Arboleda - Assistant Treasurer
Tracy Enger - Pastoral Care Liaison
Evan Robinson - Treasurer
Robby Schrum - Junior Warden

Vestry Class of 2024

Lauren Gustafson - Youth Formation Liaison
Mary Hix - Outreach & Justice Liaison
Bill Malone - Senior Warden
Dan Pattarini - Member-at-Large
Rushad Thomas - Evangelism Liaison

Vestry Class of 2025

Bob Boyd - Worship Liaison
Keith Davis - Stewardship Liaison
Eleanor Reed - Register
Jane Rosman - Fellowship Liaison
Andrew Serke - Children's Formation Liaison
Geoff Whitlock - Adult Formation Liaison

Parish Team Leads

Lisa Bellantoni - Education
John Boris - Pastoral Care
Cindy MacIntyre - Evangelism
Jen Pease - Outreach
Lynn Rohrs - Fellowship
Erin White - Youth
Kemp Williams - Worship



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