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April - May 2025

# GRACE NOTES

A Bi-Monthly Magazine Published by Grace Episcopal Church

3601 Russell Road | Alexandria, Virginia 22305



## HOLY IMAGINATION

## God's Eternal Creation

Photo Credit: Grace Church Archives

# From Mother Anne M. Turner

## *Rector*



Dear Friends in Christ,

*See, I am making all things new.*

God speaks these words at the end of Revelation (21:5), but they are the subtext of the entire bible. From beginning to the end, the bible is the story of God's imaginative work—creating humanity, establishing covenants, and finding new ways to redeem us all. When we speak about "God's eternal creation" (the theme of this month's issue), we might be speaking of God's eternal creativity.

God invites you and me to play along. Our human gift and responsibility is to employ our imaginations in God's service. Especially now, in Easter season, I want us to consider what new things God might have us bring to life in this place.

In recent years, the vestry has developed a new mission statement and come to a clearer understanding of our core values. This spring, we engage in the next phase of this work, which is to articulate a vision for Grace Church for the next decade.

What does a vision for the future include?

- It dreams big, ideally, with a focused goal that gives a compass to our choices. The goal may be difficult and there is no guarantee that we will meet it. But it sets our sights high.
- It is wide scale (encompassing our entire parish) and long term. It intentionally requires us to think beyond our current capacities and in so doing demands that we grow and develop as an institution.
- It is incarnational. While a vision is not simply a list of plans, it is also not simply a list of abstract goals. It might instead answer the question: if someone writes a description of Grace in 5 or 10 or 20 years, what will it say?
- It is Inherently risky. There is no "right" answer to what our future should be. The best answer is the one that spurs us forward with bravery and energy.

So, how do we get there? Watch the bulletin in weeks to come. The Visioning Team (led by Vestry Member-at-Large Eleanor Reed and including Ramee Gentry, Morgan Miller, Justin Van Wart, Laura Weidenfeld, and Meg Whelpley) have begun their work, and you can see their findings on [page 12](#). They are planning a series of activities on Sunday mornings throughout May. You can participate in more than one of these gatherings, and they each will include multiple ways to imagine and dream together.

I hope you will be a part of the new creation God is building at Grace Church.

Yours in Christ,  
Anne+



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### Grace Notes Submissions and Publication Schedule

Grace Notes is published every other month by Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia. All parishioners are encouraged to contribute articles and photos. The deadline for the next issue is May 15. Articles and photos should be emailed to [grace.notes@gracealex.org](mailto:grace.notes@gracealex.org) and will be subject to editing. The Grace Notes team includes Addie Budnick (*Design*), Chrissie Crosby (*Co-editor*), Teresa Preston (*Final Proofreader*), and Kemp Williams (*Co-editor*).

**Cover art credit: Chrissie Crosby**



# On the Mind of Father Santiago



THE REV. SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ,  
ASSOCIATE RECTOR

"Recently, during Children's Chapel (a sacred space where young hearts engage with Scripture in a way that speaks to them) one child offered a vision of God's love through art. This child, drawn to abstract expression, painted a three-part watercolor series exploring the theme of divine love (how God loves us). As she described her paintings, her words revealed a depth of theological insight that left me in awe.

In her first painting, God creates in the midst of the darkness. At first there is a bit of love and joy. But then, the second painting, God's love grows. And then, in the third painting, everything is colored by God's love. I was blown away. This child taught an entire biblical theology class with her watercolor paintings. With three simple paintings, this child illuminated a profound truth: God's love is the creative force that colors all existence. In the midst of the darkness, love and joy appear like the first glimmers of dawn. Then, God's love expands, radiating outward. Love expands and everything is bathed in the hues of divine love, as if creation itself is saturated with holiness.

This child's artwork echoes the opening chapters of Genesis, where God speaks creation into being. "Let there be light," and light explodes into existence. The cosmos unfurls at the sound of divine imagination. The universe is not a product of randomness, but of intention. It is born from the mind of God, shaped by love, and called good.

Yet creation was never a one-time event. The act of creation is ongoing, dynamic. We do not dwell in a world that was merely made and left to be. We live in a universe still pulsing with God's creative energy. Every moment, every act of goodness, every work of beauty is part of this holy unfolding (to paraphrase Saint Julian of Norwich). Creation continues - through art, through justice, through acts of healing and love.

continued on next page



*God creates in the midst of darkness*

# On the Mind of Father Santiago

*(continued from pg. 4)*

Our imagination, too, is a gift from God - a sacred spark of the divine within us. Just as God envisioned the world and spoke it into being, we are called to participate in this unfolding creation. Whether through music, storytelling, painting, or even the simple act of dreaming of a better world, our creativity is an echo of God's own. When we create, we mirror our Creator.

The Christian tradition teaches that our imagination can be sanctified, transformed into a lens through which we see the world as God sees it - radiant with possibility, steeped in grace. To create is to participate in God's work of making all things new. It is to stand before the canvas of the world and, with hearts attuned to divine love, add our own brushstrokes of justice, mercy, and beauty. We are created in the image and likeness of God. And what is that image, if not love? What is that likeness, if not freedom? To be human is to be made for creation. To create is to love. And to love is to make the world more beautiful, one act of holy imagination at a time.



*A bit of light and love*



*Colored by God's Love*



# From Mother Emma

THE REV. EMMA BRICE,

ASSISTANT RECTOR FOR FAMILY MINISTRIES & GRACE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

## Imagining the Future for Youth at Grace

When I was in high school, I read a book called *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus* by Mark Yaconelli. Clearly, I was enough of a church nerd to be reading theories about youth ministry while I was still a participant in youth programs. However, many of the central principles of this book have been on my mind as I start to dream about the next year for youth at Grace Church.

According to Yaconelli, youth ministry should not be about doing more or accomplishing impressive feats. Rather, youth ministry ought to be a place of acceptance and welcome. For our youth, it may be one of the only spaces in their week where they can show up with their emotions, fears, and hopes and know that they will be held and supported without judgement.

Here are five key characteristics of contemplative youth ministry:

**1. Slowing Down and Listening:** Many youth programs focus on performance and trying to “fix” teens or convince more teens to go to church. A contemplative approach emphasizes presence and listening to the youth and to God. It is creating opportunities for youth to encounter God directly, and it trusts youth to be the primary stewards of their own faith.

**2. Being Present Over Doing More:** Instead of stressing about finding the perfect activities to plan, a contemplative approach prioritizes being together rather than always doing. In our efficiency and productivity-focused culture, just being together can feel countercultural. It is choosing to prioritize people over resume-building activities. It is showing up for one another, not for the activity.

**3. Spiritual Formation for Leaders:** For a contemplative approach to work, adult volunteers need to be open to deepening and transforming their own faith lives in order to authentically minister to youth. Being authentic about the challenges and joys of our own lives with Christ holds space for youth to explore, question, and grow. We are not just adults in the room for safety; we are partners in exploring our faith together.

**4. Creating Sacred Space:** Youth ministry should be an environment in which youth feel safe to be vulnerable and authentic, where they don't have to perform, where they will never be graded or evaluated. Youth programs are different from other extracurriculars because the goal is not to accomplish tasks or win; the goal is to build a life-giving, loving, and Christ-like community that supports one another through the ups and downs of life.

**5. Jesus at the Center:** At its core, contemplative youth ministry is about supporting young people to experience the presence of Jesus in their actual lives, not just learn about church in a classroom-style setting.



When I imagine the future direction for youth ministries at Grace, I hope to foster the growth of these principles. I hope that our youth, who are busy so many hours of the day, can come to youth group and find rest. They can exhale, laugh, relax, and build meaningful connections to each other and to God.



Some of our  
Great  
Grace  
Youth



The previous J2A confirmation class in 2023

*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

*(Matthew 11:28-30)*

# OPS & COMM

*Operations & Communication @ Grace*



KEVIN HAMILTON,

*DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATION*

One of the greatest lines I have ever heard on leadership was this, “a self made man hasn’t made much.” I believe it was leadership expert John Maxwell who said it on one of his teaching cassette tapes that I received monthly in the mail when I was in my early twenties. I know what you are thinking... “Kevin, aren’t you are too young to have received cassette tapes in the mail?” Ok, so no one is thinking that.

The statement is saying that if we are going to do something of significance, it will need to be much bigger than just ourselves. We may make a contribution alone, but we make a significant difference together. I have always been blessed to work with amazing people whose giftedness and talent was remarkable. Grace has been no exception. This is why I always am sad when it is time to say goodbye to a member of our team who has made an impact.

Addie, whose last name was Tapp when she started with us but is now Budnick, has served as our Communications contractor for a couple of years. She was with us during two different seasons, which during both her attention to detail and ability to juggle many pressing deadlines while remaining a calm and positive professional have been stellar.

Addie has been a integral member of the communications team working on bulletin creation, most of our mass email communications, updating the website with the weekly bulletins/clergy letter, and is a part of the Grace Notes team helping with design of this magazine. But now that Addie is wrapping up her time at Virginia Theological Seminary, she will leave her position with us mid May.

I could go on and on about Addie’s many contributions and why she is a joy to work with, but I want to give her a chance to say goodbye to you as she prepares for her next great adventure, which I will let her share. Addie will continue to do great things and I am so thankful I will have the opportunity to say “I knew her when...”

## A NOTE FROM ADDIE

These past three years at Grace have been a true joy. I started at Grace after Mother Anne put a call out for some part-time administrative assistance in the VTS Community facebook page, and I reached out to her to see if she might consider someone with no experience but an interest in learning. I am so grateful for that post - and her boldness! My time (virtually, and in person) at Grace has taught me so much about liturgy, about communication, about good worship, and about teamwork. And that I am Kevin’s #1 fan! Graduation is bittersweet for me, as it means leaving behind Grace and all that you have done for me in my formation. But I am excited to share that I have been called to serve as a priest at St. James Episcopal Church in Wilmington, North Carolina beginning this summer! My husband and I are excited for this new chapter, and will carry the beautiful memories of these past three years at Grace with us as we go. Please say hello if you’re ever in town!



# Upcoming Music Highlights

DR. ALAIN TRUCHE, *DIRECTOR OF MUSIC*

## Holy Week & Easter

Holy Week is the busiest week for the choir. They will sing the **Choral Tenebrae** on Wednesday April 16. This year I have changed a few things, so I invite you to come experience this special liturgical service during Holy Week. It features readings, psalms, and choral music, culminating in the symbolic extinguishing of candles to represent the darkness of Christ's death and resurrection.

On **Maundy Thursday**, the choir will sing a beautiful setting of the Latin hymn "Ubi Caritas" written by Norwegian composer Ola Gjeillo.

On **Easter Sunday**, the brass quintet will be back and offer a Festival Prelude beginning at 10 AM along with a couple of organ pieces for the occasion. The choir will sing the very exciting "Antiphon" from Five Mystical Songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

## Handbells in May

On May 18, the Handbells will play pieces appropriate for the Easter Season. The prelude will be an arrangement of the French tune "Noel Nouvelet," which is paired with the hymn text "Now the Green Blade Riseth." The piece during the Offertory contains vigorous strains of G. F. Handel which are brilliantly intertwined with tunes related to the hymns "The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done" and "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing."

## Choral Evensong in May

The choir will offer the traditional Choral Evensong on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM. They will sing one of my favorite settings of the Evening Canticles by Ralph Vaughan Williams. The anthem will be "Ye Choirs of New Jerusalem" by Charles Villiers Stanford, a celebrated Anglo-Irish composer.





# Grace Episcopal School



**AMANDA  
HUNGERFORD,  
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

Springtime at Grace Episcopal School is a season of beauty—not just in the blooming trees and flowers, but in the growth of our students. Each faculty and staff member is blessed with the opportunity to experience this growth each and every day.

Our Junior Kindergarteners, who once asked teachers to write their names, are now confidently writing their own, even their friends' names. Kindergarteners, who began the year learning letter names and sounds, are now joyfully writing their own creative stories during free time. Second graders have moved from mastering basic addition and subtraction to diving into multiplication and division, all while being captivated by novels of every genre. And our fifth graders—who have spent the year launching their own market day businesses, designing plans for possible playground renovations, and applying to middle schools—are now in their final countdown of days at Grace. With the perspective of “almost alumni,” they’re seeing Grace through a new lens, savoring each beautiful moment and appreciating every “last” along the way.





We still have so much to look forward to in the final months of school. Students will showcase their performing arts talents at both the school talent show, Talents and Treats, and the Family Celebration and Spring Performance. As the weather warms, our students will take advantage of outdoor learning opportunities, exploring curricular connections both in our own backyard and throughout the community. Teachers have planned an exciting variety of experiences, from hikes to Four Mile Run to hands-on explorations at the National Building Museum. We'll also make our final visit of the year to the Goodwin House- the Small House, where students will share highlights from their spring performance with the residents. And, of course, we'll round out the year with some of our favorite Grace traditions—Field Day, a visit from Zoo-to-You, and the much-anticipated fifth grade overnight trip.

A final chapel service led by our amazing fifth graders and a special graduation ceremony, where each student will deliver a personalized speech reflecting on their time at Grace, will mark the end of this incredible year. What lies ahead is a joyful and memorable finish to a year full of change, growth, connection, and celebration.



Grateful for the visit from Bishop Gayle Harris to Grace Episcopal School on Wednesday, April 2. It's always a joy to connect with her and give thanks for her faithful ministry



# Vestry View



## From the Visioning Committee

### IN 2023 AND 2024, OUR PARISH GATHERED TO REFLECT ON WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE VALUE, AND WHERE GOD MIGHT BE CALLING US.

2023 Conversations at ShrineMont: People listed their hopes, ideas, and visions onto posters with these topics: *Formation for service, Ethic of Belonging, Sustainable Use of Resources, Elevating our Presence in the Community, Lifting up a new generation*

2024 Affinity Group Conversations: The first two questions asked in each group were: *As you look to the future, What do you feel God is calling this parish to be? What are some of the next Chapters you would like to see written for Grace Church?*

Here are some big ideas and notes from those two moments of parish conversation. They form an interesting list of wishes and ideas about what Grace is and can be.

#### 1 BELONGING & INCLUSION

- Welcome and trust across all backgrounds
- Integrate Anglo and La Gracia communities
- Embrace multigenerational and multicultural diversity
- Safe harbor for all—noisy kids included!
- Avoid insider language; foster belonging for newcomers

#### 2 SPIRITUAL FORMATION & WORSHIP

- Liturgical, high-church identity with Eucharistic center
- Bilingual and lower-church worship options
- Deep spiritual formation for all ages
- Support for Godly Play, J2A, and Adult Forums
- Shared worship across ministries and cultures

#### 3 SERVICE & OUTREACH

- Expand community service and food pantry efforts
- Include youth and new members in service projects
- Partner with Grace School for service-learning
- Focus on equity—avoid white savior approaches
- Develop support groups for grief and life transitions

#### 4 YOUTH & GENERATIONAL GROWTH

- Youth involved in worship and leadership
- Continue EYC, pilgrimage, and youth Sundays
- Build intergenerational mentorship opportunities
- Reconnect with college-age youth
- Offer “try-it” opportunities for ministry participation

#### 5 COMMUNITY BUILDING & COMMUNICATION

- Stronger communication across all groups
- More parish-wide and multicultural events
- Digital and hybrid options for access
- Share stories to build connection and understanding

#### 6 ENVIRONMENTAL & RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

- Invest in solar and sustainable infrastructure
- Reusable and compostable product use
- Gardening and green education with Grace School
- Tie creation care to theology and ministry
- Plan long-term budgeting and staff sustainability

#### 7 VISION & IDENTITY

- Beacon of love, mercy, grace, and joy
- Embrace growth while rooted in tradition
- Keep and celebrate Episcopal heritage
- Recognize and learn from church history
- Be open to trying new things and welcoming change

We’re entering Part Three of our visioning journey—building on all that we’ve heard to imagine bold goals and a shared future for Grace. **JOIN US ON MAY 4 and 18** for more opportunities to listen, dream, and discern together.



# *Vestry Leads and Lay Partners in Ministry*

## **Class of 2025**

Keith Davis - Outreach/Justice & Evangelism  
Eleanor Reed - Member-at-Large  
Jane Rosman - Worship  
Andrew Serke - Treasurer  
Geoff Whitlock - Stewardship

## **Class of 2026**

Chad Eckles - Register  
Morgan Miller - Children  
Sarah Schultz - Senior Warden  
Mary Stewart - Adult Formation  
Eric Waskowicz - Junior Warden

## **Class of 2027**

Bill Eckel - Youth  
Ramee Gentry - Assistant Treasurer  
Colleen McArdelle - Fellowship  
Rebecca Prosser - Grace School Board  
Laura Weidenfeld - Pastoral Care

## **Clergy Team Leads**

Children's Programs - Mother Emma  
Evangelism - Fr. Santiago  
Fellowship - Fr. Santiago  
Outreach and Justice - Mother Emma  
Pastoral Care - Fr. Santiago  
Stewardship - Mother Anne  
Worship - Mother Anne  
Youth Programs - Mother Emma  
Adult Formation - Fr. Santiago

## **Parish Team Leads**

Adult Education - Anne Boris  
Children's Programs - Kristen Woodiwiss  
Evangelism - Mindy Van Wart  
Fellowship - Lynn Rohrs  
Outreach and Justice - Jennifer Pease  
Pastoral Care - John Boris  
Stewardship - Barry Joyner  
Worship - John Thompson  
Youth Programs - Heather Kelly

## **When the Vestry calls, we hope you'll answer!**

Across the next several months, the Grace Vestry will be calling members of the parish, with the goal of reaching every member of Grace by mid-Summer. We hope you will answer! The purpose of these calls is simply to connect: you to your Vestry, and your Vestry to you. We want to check-in, offer information about upcoming church events, offer access to resources like Breeze and weekly emails, and address any questions, ideas, or concerns you may have. Mostly, we are just grateful for your commitment to Grace, and want to thank you for your presence! If you have questions, we miss your in our calls, or anything else, please reach out to any Vestry member, including Sarah Schultz, Senior Warden ([sarahschultz9@gmail.com](mailto:sarahschultz9@gmail.com)/703-399-0646).



If you are not on social media, you may have missed these photos from Grace!



**Mothers and Daughters  
at the  
Altar Guild Luncheon**





**Compline Services  
Candles**



**Young Adults Holy Hike  
(It's called Billy Goat Trail  
for a good reason!)**

# Grace Quirks

With this issue, we're launching a new column called Grace Quirks, where members of our community can share a strange, funny, or quirky happening they've experienced at Grace. Kemp Williams starts us off with a funny story that happened to him while serving as a eucharistic minister. We invite you to contact us at [grace.notes@gracealex.org](mailto:grace.notes@gracealex.org) if you have a quirky story to share.

One doesn't usually find oneself laughing when serving at the altar, unless there's something funny coming from the pulpit during a sermon, when the altar party is laughing along with the rest of the congregation. One Sunday when serving as a eucharistic minister, however, I found myself laughing out loud during communion, a time when laughter really is about the last thing you'd expect to hear.

In the very early days of Christianity, the Church recognized paedocommunion, the practice of allowing young children who had been baptized to receive the sacrament of communion. In the late medieval period (c. 1200 C.E.), confirmation replaced baptism as the initiation requirement for communion, and children no longer received. It was not until 1970 that it was resolved officially at General Convention, and later reinforced by the House of Bishops, that baptism—not confirmation—would once again be the only requirement for receiving communion in the Episcopal Church. This was made official with the publication of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

Grace, like most other Episcopal churches, has adopted this practice, so seeing children at the altar rail for the eucharist these days is quite common. It is now up to parents to decide when their children are ready to receive the sacrament.

On this particular Sunday, a father brought his three young boys to the altar rail during communion. The two older boys had obviously been taught how the ritual works. They knelt beside their father to receive the wafer, waited patiently with crossed hands to receive it, then cautiously dipped the bread into the chalice. (This was pre-Covid.) The youngest boy had not yet received such instruction, and he stood, fidgeting, next to his father and brothers watching them participate. As he got more and more frustrated that he wasn't being allowed to participate like his brothers were, I could see him protesting the situation with his dad. As the others rose and they all began leaving the chancel, he turned to his father and shouted, "But I want a snack too!" Father Malm and I looked at each other and we both began to laugh out loud. The joy in serving as a eucharistic minister was made even more joyful that day. Those boys are in high school and college now, but I still can't look at any of them without remembering that episode with a chuckle.



# Adult Forum Schedule for April-May

By Anne Clift Boris

Adult Forum is offered Sunday 9:40-10:15 am in person in the St. Mark room on the second floor, or via Zoom (the link is included each Sunday in the worship email). Tea and coffee are available just outside the St. Mark Room from 9:30. All are welcome at any forum; no commitment required.

April 20	EASTER DAY	NO ADULT FORUM <i>Easter Egg Hunt (Children)</i>
April 27	Grace at Work: Ethical Journalism	<i>Chris Rugaber</i>
May 4	Images of Resurrection	<i>Anne Clift Boris</i>
May 11	Grace at Work: Keeping Health Care Providers Out of Trouble	<i>Laura Weidenfeld</i>
May 18	Grace at Work: Advancing Science, Serving Society	<i>Ted Prosser, Elias Voces</i>

## ***ADULT FORUM - CALL FOR PRESENTERS FOR 2025***

We are now scheduling additional Adult Forum presenters for 2025. We would like to hear from more people in our "Grace at Work" series, where people talk about how they live out their faith in their work lives.

There will be an opportunity in the spring to share meaningful books, and new topic suggestions are also welcome. If you have an idea of something you'd like to present, or something you'd like someone else to present, please contact Anne Clift Boris.



# NOTES FROM THE FINANCE TEAM

Thank you for making recurring donations to Grace. By making recurring gifts we can plan and project cash flow more accurately. Please consider making your recurring donations online. Once your online donation is set-up you never have to worry about writing or mailing checks again. Online gifts take less time to process and simplify record keeping for donors as well.

Donors currently give to Grace by:

Check and Cash	70%
Online	17%
Stock Donations	13%

We would love to see an increase in online giving. If you need assistance with setting up an online account don't hesitate to contact us or stop by the church any Wednesday for assistance.

For those of you who are already giving online, we noticed most of you are now covering the processing fees charged by Tithe.ly and Breeze. The processing fees are 3% for credit card donations and 1% for direct bank deposits. These fees are small individually but add up and negatively impact the church's budget when uncovered by donors. Thank you for covering online processing fees!

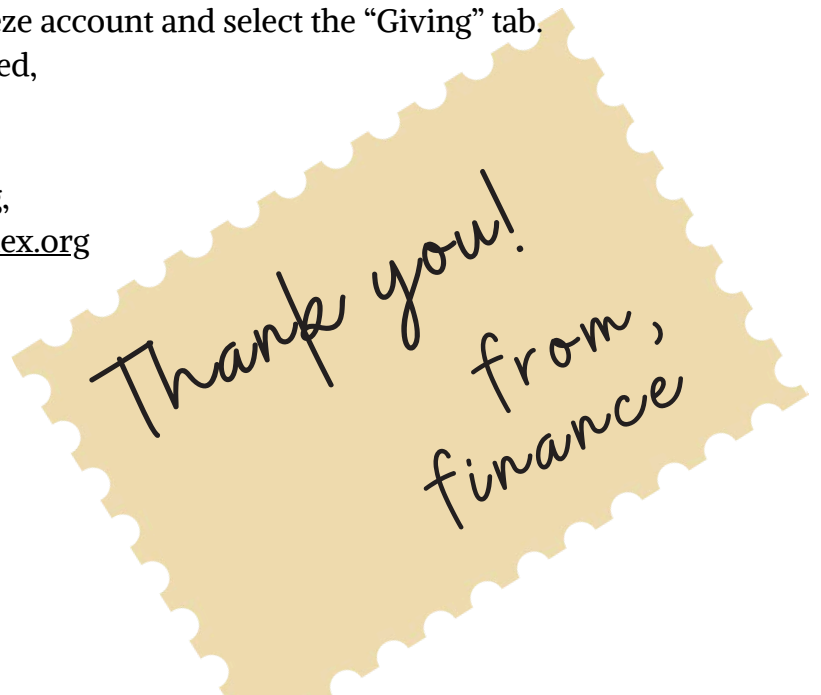
Thank you to those of you who paid a large percentage of your 2025 pledge already. As of today, 10% of those who pledged in 2025 have already paid over 50% of their annual pledge! This has a positive financial impact on our cash flow.

A Helpful Hint from Finance:

Did you know you can access your giving history and your giving statement at any time on Breeze? To see your giving, log into your Breeze account and select the "Giving" tab. From there, you can adjust the dates and, if needed, print a physical copy of your statement.

If you ever have any questions about your giving, reach out to the Finance Team at [giving@gracealex.org](mailto:giving@gracealex.org)

Thank you again for all you do to support Grace.



# *Hope in a Mess*

by Anne Clift Boris

We live in a messy time. Lately some words of Paul Simon's song "An American Tune" keep playing in my head:

I don't know a soul who's not been battered  
I don't have a friend who feels at ease  
I don't know a dream that's not been shattered  
Or driven to its knees

It can be hard to feel hope when you've been driven to your knees. Yet the hardest, messiest Easter of my life was also the most filled with hope.

In spring 2013 my parents attended the 50<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the American Association of Pastoral Counsellors in St. Louis, Missouri; my father had also attended the very first conference, in 1963. Unfortunately, Dad fell and broke his hip and was taken by ambulance to a busy trauma hospital, where he had to wait a day and a half for the needed surgery. I had the freest schedule, so I flew out and stayed with my mom for the next two and half weeks, even though it meant missing Holy Week and Easter at Grace with my husband – no small loss.

The surgery went well, but Dad had a bad reaction to the anesthesia and was in delirium for some days after the surgery. This meant he was moved out of his nice private room and into the dementia ward, a hot crowded room with five weak demented patients, some of them dying, and a medical attendant permanently sitting on watch. It wasn't easy for mom and me to squeeze chairs next to dad's bed.

We had a terrible time trying to comfort my father. He always knew who we were, but he didn't know where he was or what was happening to him. He had had a nightmare about being tortured in prison, and thought that his torturers were still watching from the corners of the ceiling. He was also frantically convinced that he had to get up to prepare his Easter sermon. Mom and I were reassured that he knew that Easter was the next day, but we had to keep telling him to stay in bed, that his only job was to get well, that he did not have to prepare a sermon. This went on for hours. It was hard to leave that night, but we needed to sleep.

The next day, Easter morning, Mom and I arrived at 8 am hoping to be in time to meet the doctor. We arrived just as the young resident was leaving the room - with a smile on his face, which was very rare for anyone leaving that depressing room. He told us he could hardly keep from laughing because when he arrived, he found my father preaching in delirium, delivering an Easter message about how God made and loves us all, and how we need to love each other in spite of racial and other differences, and how the resurrection was about hope. The doctor said all around the room the other dementia patients were nodding and crossing themselves. The doctor just thought it was funny, a crazy old man preaching to other crazy old people, though underneath you could tell he kind of wished there were something in it.

*continued on the next page*



*“Hope in a Mess”, continued*

For my mother and me, this was not a joke, but the work of the Holy Spirit. Dementia is a kind of prison, and my father’s preaching, in his prison, had brought hope to other souls in prison. Neither he nor his fellow patients could attend church – most couldn’t even walk, and one died later that day - but through my father’s preaching, they all had an experience of hope on Easter day. Even at the lowest point of his life, God was working through my father.

Hearing that story gave my mother and me hope. Having a priest my parents had never met bring us communion the afternoon of Easter day gave us even more hope in the midst of the mess. It didn’t change what had happened to my father, nor was it the end of suffering for any of us, but it did change the meaning of what had happened, for him, for my mother, and for me.

The first Easter Day wasn’t the end of suffering for the first disciples either. Consider the mess Jesus’ friends were in the day after the crucifixion: their friend was dead. Their hopes of a Messiah to solve their political problems were over. Judas, who betrayed him, killed himself. Peter, who denied him, felt ashamed and isolated himself from his friends. The rest of the disciples were in hiding lest they be arrested next. The women who had watched Jesus’ torture from a distance must have found it hard to sleep with those images burned into their memories, so as soon as the Sabbath was over they set out with the restlessness of insomniacs to carry spices to the tomb even though it was still too dark to see the road properly.

It’s not hard to imagine why those men and women found it so hard to believe the news of the resurrection, even as they began to see and speak and even eat with the resurrected Jesus. Their situation was still messy, and in many ways their hard times and their hard work were just beginning; but they were getting something greater than they had ever imagined.

I do not know how the present messes of our personal lives or our nation’s life will play out; but Easter gives me hope in a future I cannot yet see.

**Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:24-25)**

# Grace-ful Worship

## “A New Serenity Prayer”

All members of Alcoholics Anonymous (myself included) know the “Serenity Prayer” because it’s recited at every single meeting.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference. Amen.*

It wasn’t until recently that I discovered a new version of the prayer that was written by Father James Martin, a Jesuit priest and author of many books, including “The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything.”



*God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the people I cannot change,  
which is pretty much everyone,  
since I’m clearly not you, God.  
At least not the last time I checked.  
And while you’re at it, God,  
please give me the courage  
to change what I need to change about myself,  
which is frankly a lot, since, once again,  
I’m not you, which means I’m not perfect.  
It’s better for me to focus on changing myself  
than to worry about changing other people,  
who, as you’ll no doubt remember me saying,  
I can’t change anyway.  
Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up  
whenever I think that I’m clearly smarter  
than everyone else in the room,  
that no one knows what they’re talking about except me,  
or that I alone have all the answers.  
Basically, God, grant me the wisdom  
to remember that I’m not you. Amen.*



I haven’t memorized it entirely yet, but I’m getting close. When I say it every morning, I think about the things I cannot change: my age, my alcoholism, politics, and my tendency to isolate more as I age. Then I think about the things that I can change: exercise more, stay sober, vote for candidates that I believe will help our government and our people, and reach out to family and friends. With these reminders firm in my mind, it’s a great way to start each day.

– June Huber





**“Why do you look for  
the living among the  
dead? He is not here but  
has risen.”**



Easter morning is when Jesus rose from the tomb —just like the rising **sun** brings light to the world.

The **cross** reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice and His resurrection.

The **candle** shows the light of Christ dispelling darkness and offering hope and eternal life.

Jesus is called the “**Lamb of God**,” for His purity and His sacrifice for us.

The **lily** stands for purity, new life, and the resurrection of Jesus.

The **Bible** tells us the story of Easter.

The **egg** represents new life and resurrection, and when cracked open symbolizes Jesus breaking free from the tomb.

**Butterflies** illustrate resurrection and rebirth.



Art Credit: ChatGPT





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