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November 2023

# GRACE NOTES

A Monthly Magazine Published by Grace Episcopal Church

3601 Russell Road | Alexandria, Virginia 22305

*November Theme:*  
*Amazing Grace*



# A Message from Bill Malone, *Senior Warden*

Christian Freedom and the Cheerful Giver

Dear Friends in Christ—

In St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he tells the church that God loves a cheerful giver. In fact, he emphasizes that "each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Autumn is stewardship season at Grace Church, and we'll all be reminded to consider carefully what we will pledge for the church in 2024. It's good to know that scripture allows us to make up our own minds about this decision. While tithing, or giving ten percent of one's income, is the traditional standard for giving, it's not a law—much as some would wish it to be!

The other members of the Vestry and I are fiduciaries of the parish, among other responsibilities. It's not easy to say, "Give whatever you like." I would love to enumerate the costs we face to run a church, remind you inflation has made it more expensive, and explain that, if we charged admission at the door each Sunday, it would need to be about seventy-five dollars per family. (Sorry, yes, the math is real, but not the point.)

However, while the bills and salaries need to be paid, and our outreach ministries depend on more than our goodwill to keep going, I believe there is a very practical spiritual truth to what St. Paul is saying.

I would put it this way: Christianity is unique in that it's not ultimately about what we do for God, but the reverse—it rests on what God has already done for us in Christ. This is the meaning of grace.

We are not meant to pay our pledges to the church as an expiation or as a way to influence God to like us more. We are meant to give out of joy because Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension mean we do not carry the burden of sin, the weight of proving ourselves worthy, the intellectual gymnastics of justifying our existence, or the communal fight to defend against the darkness. God already accomplished that in Christ.

This is also the meaning of freedom. Rather than be controlled by our desire for wealth, power, or security—forces that cause most of the sin and destruction in the world—we can be controlled by the power of love. This is a power that lets us be our true selves. A true community. A true light on a hill for those in need.

This year, as we make our pledges, may we be empowered to dwell in generosity, joy, and freedom—not fearing the loss of security or luxury that giving up some income might represent, but setting our sights on the truly amazing grace that runs right through our lives into eternity.



In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Malone".

**Bill Malone, Senior Warden**





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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](mailto:grace.notes@gracealex.org) and will be subject to editing. The Grace Notes team includes Joyce Ames, Kevin Hamilton, Diana Jarrett, and Liz Rugaber.

# On the Mind of Father Santi



THE REV. SANTI RODRIGUEZ,  
ASSOCIATE RECTOR



"Amazing Grace" is a hymn about salvation—about the ways God redeems us on this side of eternity. But the sweet sound that finds us and gives us true sight is the hope of eternal friendship with God. Tough times renew my longing for the blessed assurance that we are created for communion with God for all eternity.

In early November, we celebrate All Saints' Day (traditionally on the first), followed by All Souls/All Faithful Departed (traditionally on the second). This year we'll celebrate both on the fifth. This convergence makes me ponder how our souls give us the capacity for friendship with God.

We believe that we have souls. And they give us the capacity to be in relationship with God. So, what is the soul? The late John Polkinghorne, who was a high particle physicist and Anglican priest, says that our soul is what links us to the Eternal. This is how he puts it: "The soul is the fundamental pattern of the self. It is the blueprint of our existence. This soul is remembered by God after death ... and becomes the basis for the reconstitution of our selves in the resurrection of the body."

I love this sense of the soul as the pattern or blueprint of our existence. And also the reminder that as Christians our hope is not heaven—as the place where we will be only spiritual creatures—but the Heavenly Jerusalem

and the Resurrection of the Body. It is the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus that makes this possible.

Let me return to something else Polkinghorne says. He states that the soul is remembered by God, that the soul links us to the Eternal. The soul gives us the capacity for a relationship with God. To know and to love God. Since God is eternal, this capacity to know and to love God proves to us that we are not simply limited to space and time. We feel in our bones that there is something in us that links us to God. Something that even now transcends this world.

We speak readily and happily of souls—of the enduring existence of those who have gone before into death. The celebrations of All Saints' Day and All Souls affirm our belief in life after death. This belief has enormous practical consequences. We are still related to those who have gone before us.

The faithful departed are in a real sense gone; they are not available in an ordinary way. But they have not disappeared. They are connected to God and therefore to everything that God loves. They are not so much "somewhere else." They are "somehow else." They exist in a different way, so they can relate to us perhaps in very intimate ways.

We think of the dead in very spatial ways: they are a long way away. They are in a different dimensional system. Perhaps, it is more true to say that the dead are "somehow else," and therefore maybe even closer to us than they were when they were alive in this world. Thus, we can and should relate to them—above all else, chiefly by prayer. Just as we can ask people here to pray for us, we can ask our faithful departed to pray for us as well. We can also pray for them. This is a powerful reminder of our belief in eternal life, and also of God's love and care for our souls: that in God's love we are still related to those who have gone before us. This is amazing grace.



# From Mother Emma

THE REV. DEACON EMMA BRICE,  
ASSISTANT RECTOR FOR FAMILY MINISTRIES & GRACE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

## Mazes or Labyrinths?

I love puzzles, so last year my mom gave me a book entitled *Mega-Maze Adventure: Journey Through the World's Longest Maze in a Book*. This maze starts on the first page and continues down an intricate path until the last page when you finally reach the end. The first page of the puzzle took me over TWO HOURS to complete. I am not exaggerating when I say that I have never worked on such a difficult maze. And after two hours on the first page, I have never picked up that book again. I felt utterly defeated. Thankfully, not all mazes are that hard. During my first week at Grace, I got lost approximately ten times per day in our wonderful but confusing building. Someone joked at coffee hour that we should call ourselves "A Mazing Grace," and I have often thought of that as I powerwalk up and down our many hallways and stairs. But after a week or so, I got my bearings and learned my way around.

The past six weeks at Grace have felt a lot like a maze. We feel unsure of exactly where we are going. We fear making a wrong turn or hitting a dead end. Perhaps we fear we will get stuck in this maze of uncertainty forever. And maybe you feel like you're stuck in a maze in other areas of your life as well.

But what if we are not in a maze at all? What if, instead, we are walking a labyrinth with God?

A labyrinth is a pathway resembling a maze, but, unlike in a maze, there is only one path to follow. There are many turns in a labyrinth but no wrong ones, no dead ends. No matter how uncertain you may feel, each step of a labyrinth brings you closer to the center.

I remember walking the labyrinth at Shrine Mont for the first time when I was a young camper. The counselor introduced it by saying, "There's no right or wrong way to do it. You can walk at your own pace and think about anything you want. Don't be afraid to let your mind wander and simply appreciate the beauty around you. Take your time and enjoy it." I stepped slowly, one foot in front of the other. I felt the pebbles crunch beneath my sneakers, the breeze flow through my ponytail, and a purposeful silence fill the group. I felt close to God.

I believe that we are walking a labyrinth together at Grace this year. It might look like a maze from the outside, but every step is purposeful and prayerful. With each step we take, we are looking to God for guidance, and God indeed shows us the way forward.

And if we are indeed walking a labyrinth together this year, I wonder how we will be spiritually transformed by this experience. I wonder how we will praise God with each step. I wonder how we will learn to concentrate on God. If this year is a labyrinth, thanks be to God because in a labyrinth we are never alone. As the psalmist proclaims, "Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light upon my path." (Psalm 119:105)

May the God of light shine for you like a lantern and guide you in all that you do. May God guide our feet and hold our hands as we walk this labyrinth together at Grace. And may God bring us in safety through each and every uncertainty.



The Shrine Mont Labyrinth  
Photo credit: Shrine Mont website



# OPS & COMMS

*Operations & Communications @ Grace*



**KEVIN HAMILTON,**  
*DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATION*

"Amazing Grace" is my favorite hymn. It holds a very special place on my journey, in many profound ways. One of those ways took place November 7, 2019, the day my father died. I moved my parents into my home when my dad was battling lung cancer and was honored to serve as his caretaker during at-home hospice. As dad's journey here was in its last moments, our close friend began an impromptu singing of that old familiar hymn. We all joined in and that is how my father left this planet—surrounded by love and the singing of "Amazing Grace."

As I think about my dad, what comes to the forefront of my mind is his heart for serving quietly in whatever ways were needed. I often am reminded of that service when I interact with the office volunteers here at Grace. With the same spirit to serve, these special folks just show up and do what is needed to support the office. Some days it may be answering phones and welcoming visitors; other days it may be helping with mailings, researching various service vendors, or holding down the fort when staff is offsite. They love the people and mission of the church they call their own, and it shows.

It has been said that the greatest ability is availability, and I think there is some truth in that statement. Grace Church is filled with so many parishioners who say, "Here am I, ready and willing to serve." Grace Church is truly amazing because the people are amazing.

Are you looking for a way to serve at Grace? Do you have some time on weekdays? Consider joining the office volunteer team. Shifts are 10 am – 2 pm Monday through Thursday and 10 am – noon on Friday. You can sign up to serve as your schedule permits. Some volunteers serve one day or more a week, and some serve one day a month. It truly is a flexible ministry.

There are occasional support projects in addition to the main tasks of answering calls and greeting visitors. Computer/technical skills are not required, and computer tasks are only given to volunteers who wish to provide that type of support when needed. Being an office volunteer is a great way to be an encouragement to others while also supporting the staff in the work of the church.

If you are interested and would like more information, feel free to email me at [director.of.operations@gracealex.org](mailto:director.of.operations@gracealex.org) and I can get you in touch with Mary Fox, who leads the scheduling of this dynamic team.



*Kevin and his father, Quinton "Tubby" Hamilton, preparing for communion at their church in 2018*



# Grace Episcopal School



**PATTI CULBRETH,**  
**HEAD OF SCHOOL**



*"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound!"* These words capture the sounds of Grace School each day. Our students have hit their stride and are enjoying the challenges of learning math, science, language arts, religion, and more. Classroom communities have bonded and know what it means to be filled with Grace.

The fall is always a wonderful time to celebrate community. From our events marking National Episcopal Schools Week in October to our Gala in November, we have much to celebrate. The fall has allowed for parent coffees, parent/teacher conferences, chapel services, and eucharists together. Our students love their time together in the classrooms, on the playing fields, and in the Grace Cafe at lunchtime. The addition of Pizza Fridays is a big hit!

November is a time of thanksgiving, and we are thankful for our dedicated teachers, supportive parents, and amazing students. We are also thankful for Mother Emma, our School Chaplain, who has been a wonderful addition. Her classes in Godly Play as well as her messages in chapel fill our hearts. The children love to try to stump her with questions about God, but she is up to the challenge.

Wishing everyone a blessed Thanksgiving season!







# Campus Matters

ROBBY SCHRUM,  
JUNIOR WARDEN



## A little too much excitement for the junior warden in the month of October!

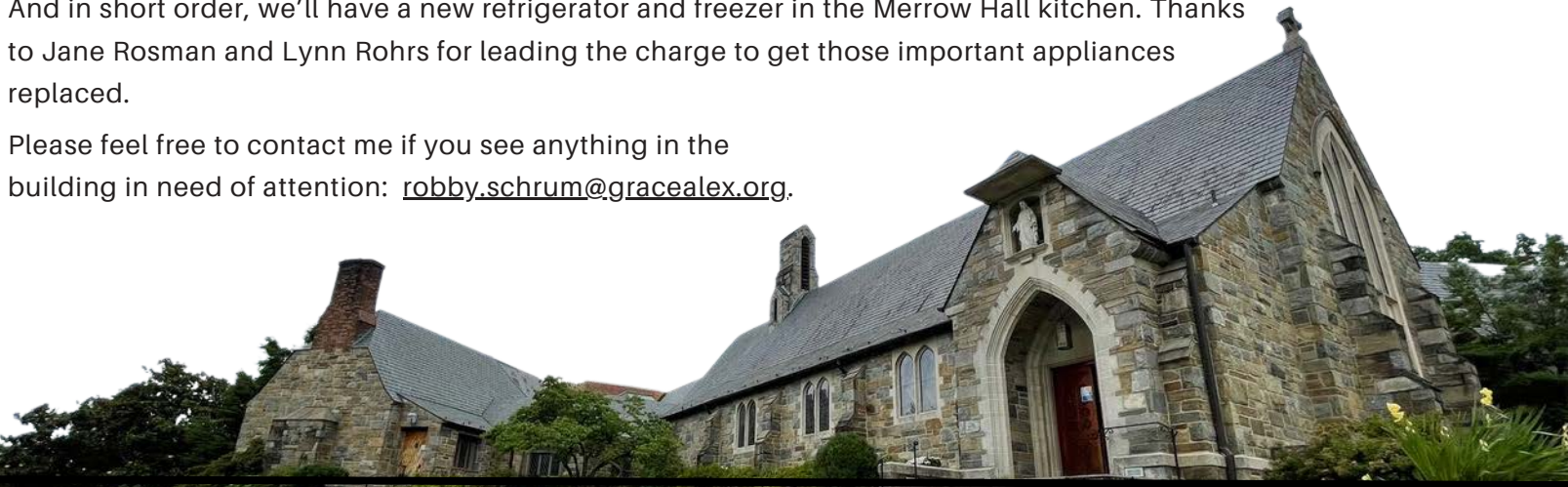
On Sunday, October 22, the urinal in the men's room on the second floor began overflowing before the 10:30 am service. Thankfully, a team of crack volunteers was able to clean up the water in short order. We'll work to get things fixed in the weeks to come.

We continue to await the installation of custom window wells outside Merrow Hall to complete the water mitigation project there.

We've begun repairing the railing running up the steps from the glass doors to the library door. Installation of plaques to the stone in the nave commemorating the recent refurbishment of the stained-glass windows is pending.

And in short order, we'll have a new refrigerator and freezer in the Merrow Hall kitchen. Thanks to Jane Rosman and Lynn Rohrs for leading the charge to get those important appliances replaced.

Please feel free to contact me if you see anything in the building in need of attention: [robby.schrum@gracealex.org](mailto:robby.schrum@gracealex.org).



## Get Social with Grace!

Instagram



@graceepisalexva

facebook



facebook.com/  
GraceEpiscopalChurchAlexandriaVa

Facebook Group



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

YouTube



Search for Grace Episcopal Church  
Alexandria Virginia on YouTube.

X



@graceepisalexva  
(Formerly Twitter)





# Gracias: No Hay de Queso, Nomás de Papa

Father Santi reflects on the amazing gift of gratitude.

**THE REV. SANTI RODRIGUEZ, ASSOCIATE RECTOR**

Posiblemente recuerdan a Los Chifladitos—una sección creada por Roberto Gómez Bolaños dentro de su programa Chespirito. En el sketch, siempre había esta conversación entre los dos protagonistas, Chaparrón Bonaparte y Lucas Tañeda:

Chaparrón: *¿Oye Lucas?*

Lucas: *Dígame Licenciado.*

Chaparrón: *¡Licenciado!*

Lucas: *¡Gracias, muchas gracias!*

Chaparrón: *No hay de queso, nomás de papa.*

“No hay de queso, nomás de papa”, siempre ha sido una de mis frases favoritas. Parece tontería pero tiene mucha sabiduría. La frase es una contestación en Latinoamérica al “gracias”: “no hay de qué”. Chespirito simplemente alargó dicha respuesta de una forma jocosa. Para mí, además del humor, la frase siempre me ha recordado la importancia de dar gracias—especialmente darle gracias a Dios.

Este mes, celebramos en los Estados Unidos, el Día de Acción de Gracias. Esta celebración es una ocasión para, “Dar gracias al Señor, porque Él es bueno; porque es eterna su misericordia” (Salmo 117:2-4). Las misericordias de Dios nos acompañan día a día; basta tener el corazón vigilante para poder percibirlos. Al dar gracias al Señor, apreciamos y saboreamos lo verdaderamente importante. Y eso es, a fin de cuentas, la verdadera sabiduría.

La sabiduría es saber darle gracias a Dios por todo; porque todo es bueno. Agradecer, ante lo bueno y ante lo malo. Es sabernos siempre queridos por Dios: “Gracias, Papa Dios, por estar aquí a nuestro lado—en lo bueno y en lo malo.” Es también saber reconocer que todo es bueno, todo es para bien. El reconocimiento por las cosas buenas, y la esperanza de que Dios sabrá sacar un bien de lo que parece malo.

La sabiduría es acostumbrarnos a elevar nuestro corazón a Dios, en acción de gracias, muchas veces al día. Porque nos da esto y lo otro. Porque no tenemos lo que necesitamos o porque lo tenemos. Porque creó el sol, la luna, y las estrellas. Porque nos llena de vida. Porque le da vida a nuestros amigos y familiares. Porque nos da vida eterna. La sabiduría nos acostumbra a darle gracias por todo, porque todo es bueno.

La sabiduría nos enseña que podemos vivir de dos formas: llenos de resentimientos o con muchos agradecimientos. A la vuelta de los años quedan, sobre todo, motivos de agradecimiento. Podemos reconocer los contornos afilados de problemas y dificultades que quizá en su momento nos agitaron fuertemente, y podemos verlos con otros ojos, incluso con cierto humor. Adquirimos la perspectiva para ver cómo Dios nos ha ido llevando y cómo todo es gracia; todo es don de Dios. Esta es la hermosura y la sencillez de saber decir en todo: “gracias a Dios”.

Pidámosle a Dios que nos acostumbremos a elevar nuestro corazón a Dios muchas veces al día para decirle, “Gracias, muchas gracias.” Y quizás podamos escuchar a Dios decirnos, mientras sonríe, “No hay de queso, nomás de papa.”



# Opinion: Youth Perspective

## Does the Holy Spirit Have a Gender?

Annie Eason



The question of “Does the Holy Spirit have a gender?” is oftentimes not given much thought. Many people don’t think about this question because, quite frankly, there are other things to think about. Some use she/her pronouns when talking about the Holy Spirit, such as Father Santi. Some people don’t. So, does the Holy Spirit even have a gender to begin with?

According to a research paper titled *The Holy Spirit as feminine: Early Christian testimonies and their interpretation* by Johannes van Oort, early Christians spoke about the Holy Spirit as a feminine form. However, he also states that while Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, much like Romance languages today, do have gendered words, it is not the only factor as to why early Christians believed the Holy Spirit was feminine. The word “Spirit” in these languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac—is considered feminine, just like “la camiseta” (t-shirt) in Spanish is feminine. But as van Oort stated in his paper, it is not the only reason why early Christians referred to the Holy Spirit in this manner. Wisdom and the Holy Spirit have also been historically linked as the “Sophia of God,” which is feminine. The concept of Divine Presence, a feminine Jewish concept, was also tied with the Holy Spirit, and early Christians also have called the Spirit a mother.

Van Oort makes an important distinction, however, that religious language is “inherently metaphorical,” meaning that it cannot concretely define “God’s essence,” which is indescribable.

The question of “Does the Holy Spirit have a gender?” should really be a question of “Can God and/or the Holy Spirit even have a gender if gender is a construct?” It can similarly be said about non-human creatures, such as cats. Can cats have a gender if they know of neither gender constructs nor roles? Cats (probably) do not have a government or a society that enforces gender, nor do they even know simple multiplication. The larger question would then be, “What is the importance of gender as a concept in human society and to the individual?” This is obviously a question that one could write a dissertation on, and this question has many answers.

It can therefore be said that the Holy Spirit and God do not follow the concept of gender because they do not live in a human society that enforces gender. While they can be described with gendered terms, it is likely that they do not perform gender roles or identify with a gender. Father Santi said:

*You might have heard me recite the Creed and refer to the Holy Spirit as “she.” The earliest Christians—all of whom were Jewish—and many fathers and mothers of the desert saw the Holy Spirit as a feminine figure. They saw the Holy Spirit as a mother because the word in Hebrew for Spirit—ruach—is nearly always feminine, and the word in Aramaic—rucha—is always feminine. Jesus spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, and in those languages the Spirit is only “she.” This is taken up by St. Julian of Norwich and other saints who use more inclusive Trinitarian language. One of the best ways for us to think of the Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, is as a mother (the love between Father and Son), even though we know that God, in the wholeness of God, has no gender. So, I use feminine language for the Spirit of truth and love.*

While the Holy Spirit historically has been described as feminine and motherly in her nature, it does not imply that the Holy Spirit is a woman, nor does it imply that the Spirit has a gender at all.



# Mission Focus: Grace Food Pantry

By Jen Pease

## Grace Food Pantry: Giving to Receive

Generosity is one of the pillars of our church. This is demonstrated every day through the work of the Grace Food Pantry, which wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our church community, neighbors, local organizations, and ecumenical partners. When we help our neighbors, we receive the gift of giving.



### Current Need

As the Covid crisis subsides, the need persists. Food insecurity is one of the largest social issues in our community, with many working families not able to put food on the table or afford the necessities of daily living. We witness this every week when we open the pantry doors, continuing to distribute between 250 and 300 bags of food each week, along with infant care, personal hygiene, and cleaning products.

### Operations

Our mission is powered by dedicated volunteers from Grace and the local community. It takes many helping hands to run our program. This includes inventory management, bagging, unloading food deliveries, and bi-weekly distributions on Tuesdays and Fridays. We recently reduced our footprint in the front lobby and Commons areas. While operations are less visible, we continue to maintain the same level of support.

### Get Involved!

- **Volunteer** – sign up on [Lotsa Helping Hands](#).
- **Advocate** – spread the word about our mission.
- **Collect** – collect recycled brown bags (we need 600 per week!)
- **Donate**
  - Feed the Bag Monster: grab a green bag with the current wish list from the lobby and donate items from the list.
  - Donate to the Food Fund: it takes \$10K a month to maintain our current level of support. Donations can be made through Tithely or checks designated for the Food Fund.



For more information, contact Jen Pease ([jennifer.pease@gracealex.org](mailto:jennifer.pease@gracealex.org)) or Judy Willard ([judy.willard@gracealex.org](mailto:judy.willard@gracealex.org))



Max Milla and a few of many boxes



Katie and Dan Pattarini with Sandra serving as the interpreter



Max serving as the interpreter at the Commons door



Young people reading books handed out at the Food Pantry

Photo credits: Katie Pattarini, Jen Pease, and Lorna Worley

# Caring for the Least of These: Our Trash, That Is



by Liz Rugaber

Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," is often associated with the humans that Christ connects himself with: the neediest of people. But isn't everything that lives upon the Earth also part of God's creation, part of God's family? And what a job we humans have done caring for the Earth, including what I think is really "the least" of God's family of creation: our trash. What is lower than our garbage? That's right, what we throw away without thought, what we purchase without care. How can we do a better job?

The paradigm of waste reduction begins at the point of purchase, since the most effective waste reduction strategy is to not create it in the first place. Before you buy anything, you have an opportunity to REFUSE. You can REFUSE to partake of a plastic straw, you can REFUSE to purchase Styrofoam coffee cups. You can refuse to buy anything with money; go to sites like Buy Nothing or Craigslist free stuff. Try to shift your thinking: instead of "Is this the cheapest?" ask "Is this better for God's creation? Where will this go at its end of life?" You can REDUCE waste by asking yourself, "What is the least amount that I will need?" and purchase only that much.

RE-USE what you can, but be aware. We need to get away from thinking, "Oh well, it's recyclable, so it's okay, right? Or "I can donate this because somebody else will need this, right?" WRONG. Every Christian should watch [this video](#) about where the vast majority of our fast-fashion, made-with-plastic clothing ends up: Accra, Ghana. Donation companies like Goodwill, Salvation Army, and Purple Heart are all trying to resell your old clothes. And while many of them are starting to think about a circular economy rather than a linear one, even companies like ThredUp can't resell everything because of the volume and lack of quality merchandise. The message is, try to sell your things before donating them. Even if you sell items for one dollar, at least you know they really are going to someone who will use them. If you donate to Goodwill, etc., they may be sending your things across the globe to countries that don't need them any more than you do.

After you have Refused, Reduced, and Re-used, Recycling is among the LAST tiers of the waste reduction pyramid. I gave a presentation on recycling at a Grace Adult Forum on October 8. Look up what your jurisdiction does not allow to be collected in its municipal trash. At the present time, Alexandria only allows plastics with a chasing-arrows code number of one or two. Fairfax allows only water bottles and laundry jugs. Arlington still accepts plastics numbered one through seven, but I strongly advise you to follow these procedures:

- **When in Doubt, Throw It Out.** Northern Virginia jurisdictions send their black bin municipal trash to a Covanta waste-to-energy incinerator in Alexandria or Loudoun County. This facility burns your trash and captures the energy to power around 16,000 homes per year.
- **As Big as Your Palm, #1 - #5, Keep It Alive, But Beware of 666.** Recycling sort equipment was traditionally made to process paper alone, not plastics, so many smaller items (smaller than the size of your palm, including individual yogurt containers), will fall through the slats and be swept off the floors. When the floors are swept, these MRFs (material recovery facilities—the sorting centers) consider them trash and may take them to a landfill. Plastics numbered one through five generally have decent resale markets (remember, someone has to want to buy your recyclable commodity or there is no recycling at all). Number six, polystyrene, can often be a salad clam shell material, but it can leach styrene, a known carcinogenic, and it really never breaks down. You have no control over what happens to your recyclables once the hauler truck carries them away. Putting them in the trash is one way you can help control the outcome and ensure they do not end up in the oceans.

Photo Credit: Canva.com







Barbara Morris

# An Occasional WORD

## Amazing Grace

This month's theme of Amazing Grace is especially meaningful to me. You may recall that recently I published a book about my rescue cat, Cora.

Not surprisingly, for about a month after I rescued Cora, she remained a bit tense and wary. Then, one day, by chance, as I was petting her as she rested next to me on the sofa, I felt the tension gradually melt under my fingers. Cora's little body softened, and she sank closer to me on the cushions. Why, I wondered. Nothing had changed except that I had started to sing "Amazing Grace." For the past fifteen minutes, as I petted Cora, I had been softly singing a few of my favorite hymns. I do that fairly often because I have musical ear syndrome and need to give my ears something to listen to and to keep my brain busy. If there is nothing to occupy them—if there is silence—both the ears and brain fill the void with music or voices that don't actually exist. It can get very annoying, so I often sing or talk out loud to myself to keep my brain happily occupied.

Anyway, this day, as Cora and I rested on the sofa, I was singing hymns, and there was no doubt that while Cora listened politely to all of them, she fell under the spell of the soothing rhythms of "Amazing Grace." I only know the first verse so, to keep Cora relaxed, I repeated it several times. Eventually the rhythmic repetition loosened my own tensions and I, too, slouched and slumped against Cora.

It was a wonderful afternoon.

From that time on, I often drew Cora to me, crooned "Amazing Grace," and felt her gradually sink deeper into my embrace. Her eyes slowly closed, and her paws grew limp. In the beginning, once or twice she opened her eyes and gave me a pleading look as if to say, "This is divine, but a bit monotonous. Can you please learn at least one more verse?"

I intended to, but I never got around to it, and, frankly, I prefer it this way. It's the way we first touched one another's hearts when Cora was still a bit wary. It was the song we knew and loved. It was Amazing Grace. It was, and always will be, "Our Song."

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## Reminder

The 229th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia will be held November 2 - 4, 2023, at the Fredericksburg Convention Center, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

For more information, visit the Diocesan website at <https://www.thediocese.net/who-we-are/governance/annual-convention/229th-annual-convention-2023/>.

# Inquiring minds want to know...

## What's your favorite hymn? Why?

### Mother Emma

As a lifelong choir member, this is a really hard question for me! I suppose I'd have to say "Seek Ye First" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 711) is my favorite because it carries a lifetime of memories. I've sung it everywhere from Shrine Mont camps to family funerals to my wedding ceremony.



### Father Santi

I do not have a favorite. There are many hymns I love. Every season there is a hymn that stays with me and brings me great comfort. This season of my life it has been "O God of Earth and Altar." (*The Hymnal 1982*, 591) It was written by G. K. Chesterton. I love Chesterton and I love the words and music of this hymn. "Bow down and hear our cry...bind all our lives together, smite us and save us all ... " God smites us with the power of God's glory. God ignites our hearts. We are set aflame with faith, and we are consumed until all there is in us is wonder, love, and praise.

### Durango Jenkins

I can't narrow it down to just one. That being said, one that I find particularly powerful right now is "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." (*The Hymnal 1982*, 474) I think that the tune is simple and sweet and carries the words. In verse three this hymn reminds us that God can take even a cruel instrument of torture (a cross) and turn it into something that brings life. The final verse reminds us of our Christian hope in God, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."



### Lorna Worley

I have lived with *The Hymnal 1940 and 1982* for sixty years. I have sung most of the hymns in both of them. My favorite depends on the situation, so I have many favorites. But if I had to choose from all the ones I love, I would choose "Humbly I Adore Thee." (*The Hymnal 1982*, 314) It's a communion hymn and has in it two of my favorite lines in all the hymns: "...to my taste thy sweetness never failing give," and "...face to face thy splendor, I at last shall see..." Both of them answer a deep need in my soul.

### Chrissie Crosby

(It's very hard to say just one.) My favorite hymn is "Not Here for High and Holy Things" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 9), which I grew up knowing as "Awake, Awake to Love and Work." I loved it first for the last verse: "To give and give and give again what God has given thee..." but I love the expanded version for the "...silver glistening of all the million, million stars, the silent song they sing."



### Ford Chinworth

Asked to name my favorite hymn, I immediately thought of several possibilities. Unable to settle on one, I went to the hymnal to seek out all the possibilities; that list amounted to fifty-eight candidates but allowed me to realize the varying reasons particular contenders stood out. I identified four reasons for choosing:

1. Profound music – striking melodic line or memorable harmonization
2. Striking poetry
3. An illuminating message of faith
4. Memorable personal association

Determining that my favorite hymn should be the one that represented all four aspects, I did manage to come up with a winning finalist:

"Let Saints on Earth in Concert Sing" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 526)

1. The music (1615, by music scholar Thomas Ravenscroft) evokes a great chorale, such as those perfected by Johannes Brahms 250 years later.
2. Striking poetry? This hymn's opening phrase fulfills its nomination: "Let saints on earth in concert sing with those whose work is done..." The author is Charles Wesley, brother of the great theologian and evangelist John Wesley and composer of twenty-four hymns represented in our hymnal.
3. Packed into its five compact verses, the hymn expresses a central tenet of the Christian faith: the promise of eternal life—creating vivid imagery of a bond with "those who've gone before" guided by Jesus.
4. My personal association with this hymn is having selected it, with my musically gifted brother, as the closing hymn for our mother's funeral. I also anticipate asking my fellow Grace parishioners to sing it when I have taken my turn crossing "Jordan's narrow stream."



# Why Grace?

By Lisa Bellantoni



What brought me to Grace Church? That's an easy question to answer: family! In 1965, we moved from Alabama to Alexandria to what is now Brad Bergmann and June Huber's house. Every Sunday, Mom, Dad, my sister Tina (on Dad's shoulders), and I would walk down Russell Road to Grace. When we moved around the corner

to a house on Norris Place, I was old enough to walk by myself, cutting through the Saffelle's yard (another Grace family). Growing up, I loved that my church was just across the street! Grace was our second home. Mom taught preschool there for many years and Tina and I went to school there.

*From the 1972 Grace Church Directory*

As I grew up, my faith developed by witnessing my parents' devotion and dedication to our Grace family. It never crossed my mind that Grace wouldn't be in my life. I watched my parents develop strong friendships with other parishioners through a variety of groups and activities such as choir, Friday Funsters, Mardi Gras parties, and vestry. Their friends became like second parents to me. They were my Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders, and people with whom I felt at home—my extended family. I was so happy each time I became old enough to participate in Grace groups such as the youth choir, junior altar guild, Grace Corps, and EYC. I made my dearest friends through these groups, several of whom I still get together with these days! Grace was my life.



*From the Grace Church Directory circa 1985*

And so it continued until I went away to college, moved to Virginia Beach for my first real teaching job, met my husband Paul,

and got married (at Grace, of course). Every place I lived I found a wonderful Episcopal church family to join. However, none could compare to my Grace family.

*Lisa and Paul were married at Grace Church in 1988*



One of the most amazing things I have both witnessed and experienced at Grace is the way one can leave and return—and jump

right back into Grace. I experienced this to a small degree when I went away to college and to a larger degree after Paul and I got married and his naval career had us moving back and forth across the United States several times. Sure, there were changes such as clergy, building reconstruction, and new faces, but the constant through these changes was the joy and peace I felt whenever I was with my Grace family. These days, I'm retired and enjoying trying new opportunities at Grace. While I don't know what the future holds for me, I know my faith and Grace family will be in my life always and all ways.



*Paul, Laura, and Lisa in a more recent Grace Church Directory circa 2015*



**EVAN ROBINSON,**  
*TREASURER*

# From the Treasurer

## Finance, Budget, and Giving

Thanks to everyone for your contributions of time, talent, and treasure during all the changes and chances of this life, as the prayer book puts it. As we approach Advent and wrap up our stewardship campaign, please continue to pay your 2023 pledges or non-pledge contributions. Parishioner pledges represent our primary source of revenue, and the foundation of effective planning and budgeting. As of mid-October, our current operating budget was in deficit, and we are counting on strong, end-of-year support to finish in the black—as happened at the end of 2021 and 2022!

### Several other notes and reminders:

Giving statements were sent out to all parishioners during the first week in October, the great majority of them via email, and a few by U.S. mail. Electronic statements saved the parish several hundred dollars in postage, envelopes, paper, and printing. If you haven't received your statement or believe there's a discrepancy, please contact our finance & operations assistant, Madeline Manaker ([madeline.manaker@gracealex.org](mailto:madeline.manaker@gracealex.org)).

If you made stock contributions, please check your giving statement against your brokerage statements very carefully. Many stockbrokers do not contact the church about stock transfers or indicate who contributed the stock; we are still trying to locate and credit someone who made a generous stock contribution in August. At the end of the year, please make every effort to transfer stock before Christmas to ensure timely processing. For more information on stock donations and Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), please see last month's Grace Notes, or contact the treasurer or bookkeeper for a copy of the article.

Offering envelopes make it easier for those counting and tallying donations to credit the money to the right account, whether to the general fund or a designated fund, and for you to get credit for a charitable contribution. If you make a pledge but can't find your envelope, please write "Pledge" on the memo line of your check. Even if you receive new envelopes (sent out automatically by our vendor), please be sure to fill out a pledge card every year since pledges don't renew automatically.

Electronic giving. Grace's electronic payment portal is tied directly to our church bank account and available through [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly). You can access [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly) on our [website](https://www.gracealex.org), via your Grace [Breeze](https://breeze.org) account, or by downloading the app. [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly) makes it possible to contribute to Grace using a Visa or Mastercard, debit card, or bank account. Giving through [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly)/[Breeze](https://breeze.org) is very convenient, but using it comes with a cost as Grace Church pays a fee (about 3%) for each contribution made through [Tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly). During 2022, those fees came to more than \$5,000! To cover these fees, please swipe the selection under "Cover Fees" to the right so that it turns green.

Automatic Bank Payments (Automatic Bill Pay "ABP"). Almost every bank offers a free bill-paying service if you have a checking account. It won't cost you or Grace Church any fees and is easy to set up online—the same as setting up recurring automatic payments for home utilities or credit cards. Banks usually notify you of payments to be made and show the payment on your monthly statement. You can change or cancel such payments at any time. Payment should be made to Grace Episcopal Church, 3601 Russell Road, Alexandria, VA 22305.

Thanks again for your continuing support for Grace. If you have any questions about our finances or budget, or about any of the information presented here or in last month's Grace Notes, please contact Evan Robinson ([treasurer@gracealex.org](mailto:treasurer@gracealex.org)) or Mary Cyrus ([bookkeeper@gracealex.org](mailto:bookkeeper@gracealex.org)).

Slide button to the right to cover the fees, and have 100% of your donation go to Grace Church's mission & ministries





# Sunday Morning Adult Forum Schedule

*Adult Forum is held in the St. Mark Room on the second floor, from 9:40-10:15, or virtually via Zoom (use the link to Adult Forum in the Sunday morning email). Feel free to arrive at 9:30 for informal chatting before the forum. Coffee and tea are available just outside the St. Mark Room.*

**November 5:** Holiday Devotions for Families and Children, *presented by Mother Julius Rodriguez*

**November 12:** Living Gracefully with Transition, *presented by Reverend Pierce Klemmt*

**November 19:** The Gospel of Q Hypothesis, *presented by Kemp Williams*

**November 26: TBD**

### **December 3: NO ADULT FORUM - Intergenerational Event (Advent Wreaths)**

**December 10:** Sharing Our Nativities, *presented by members of the congregation, moderated by Father Santi*

**December 17:** The Art of Watching for the Light, *presented by Anne Clift Boris*

**December 24: CHRISTMAS EVE - NO ADULT FORUM**

# Our Mission



# To Love, Proclaim, and Serve God through

† life-giving liturgical worship

† joyful community

† empowering others

# Nuestra Misión

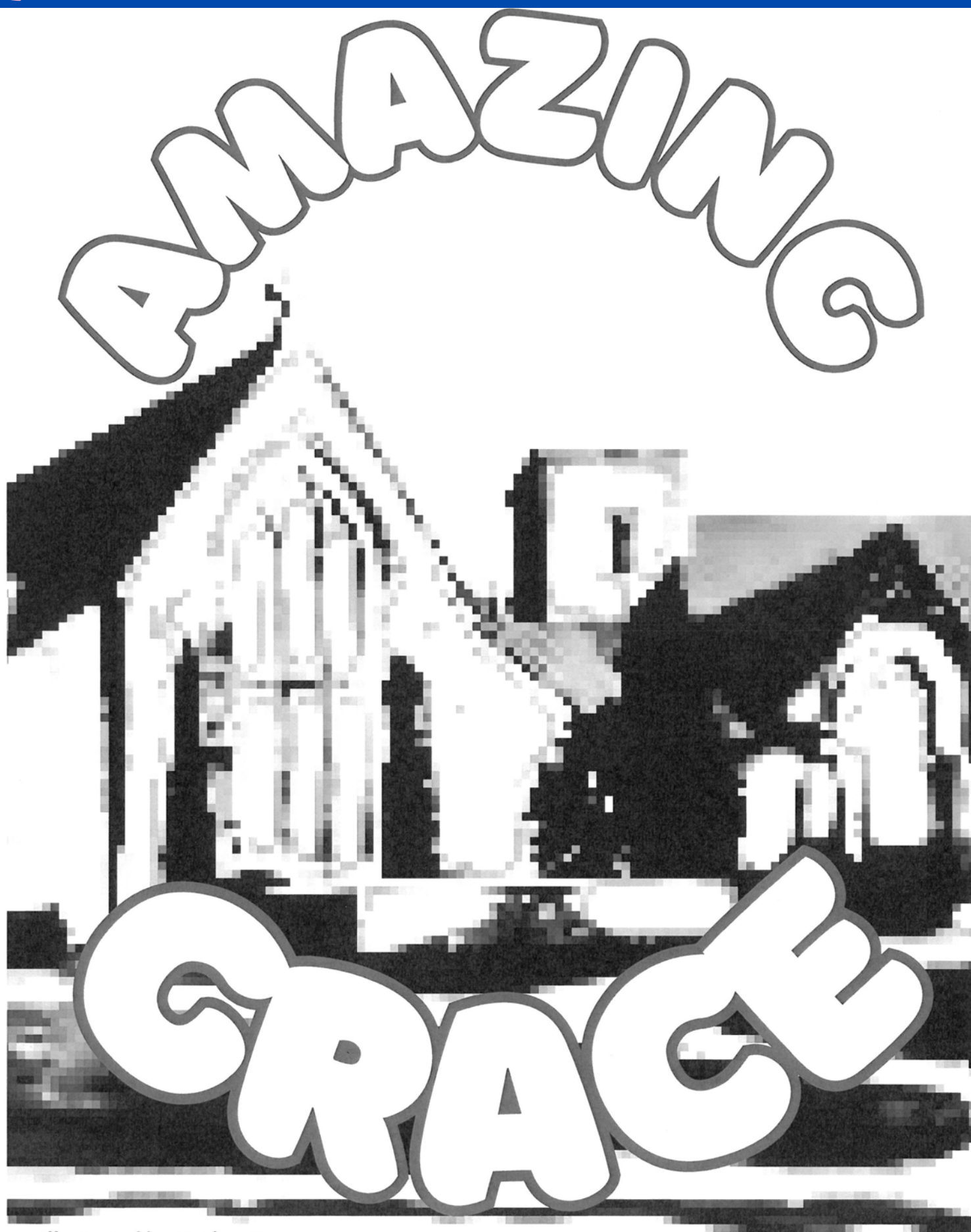
Estamos llamados a amar,  
proclamar, y servir a Dios  
a través de

† adoración que da vida

† comunidad llena de alegría

† ofreciendo una mano al prójimo









# Family Fun Puzzle Page

**Labyrinth Prayer:** Use your finger or a pencil to trace along the path. Take your time and enjoy!



*Original drawing by Robert Ferre, final graphic by Vicki Keiser. Used with permission.*



## Parish Staff

**The Rev. Amanda Bourne**

Priest Associate

**The Rev. Deacon Emma Brice**

Assistant Rector for Family Ministries & School Chaplain

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Head of Grace Episcopal School

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**Mary Cyrus**

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**Pedro Hernandez**

Sexton

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**Amorita Quintanilla**

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**The Rev. Santiago Rodriguez**

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**John "Chappy" Stowe**

Interim Music Director

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**Durango Jenkins**

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**Ignacio Solano Gómez**

[isolanogomez@vts.edu](mailto:isolanogomez@vts.edu)

## Vestry Class of 2023

Carlos Arboleda - Assistant Treasurer

Khacki Berry - Worship Liaison

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

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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