



www.gracealex.org

November/December 2024

GRACE NOTES

A Bi-Monthly Magazine Published by Grace Episcopal Church

3601 Russell Road | Alexandria, Virginia 22305



Looking forward with
Grace

From Mother Anne M. Turner

Rector



Dear Friends in Christ,

It has been over a year since I last wrote to, spoke with, or saw most of you. I am very glad this time of separation has ended, and I am grateful for the new beginning that this moment holds.

As we begin a new chapter together, I want you to know you can ask me any of the questions on your heart. I know that Mother Jenny led Grace Church in faithful, healing conversations this past year; at the same time, I was not present for those conversations, and you may have important things you were unable to say or ask. Please say or ask those things now. I make no assumptions or judgments about what anyone might think or feel.

I believe that God brings forth good even from the worst damage, and one of the opportunities that Grace Church has been given in this year is the opportunity to commit to healthy patterns of communication. My commitment to you is to be as transparent as possible. I hope that you, in return, will be honest with me. Please approach me directly when you want to know something about me or have a concern about something I've done.

I also want to name that our experience in this moment is heterogeneous. Our emotions are dappled. In the short time since my return was announced, I have heard relief, joy, and excitement. I know there is also sadness, grief, and anger. Often, all of these emotions are in one person, and often they don't follow a clear logic. I don't think the variability of our feelings diminishes their validity or their power.

My own experience, as I write, is one of profound vulnerability. I made the decision to return to Grace Church in the knowledge that I have healed tremendously since last September. I am confident in my abilities. But I cannot escape the legacies of this year: the low-grade anxiety that overtakes me sometimes, the frequent self-doubt, and of course the constant sense of exposure.

I am tempted to put on my armor against these feelings, to present myself to you as unaffected and unbothered. But I believe that bravado is not the same thing as bravery. And being truly brave—for all of us—requires living fully in the vulnerability of this time. What will help me move forward—and what, I believe, will help Grace Church—is not pretending that nothing has happened but instead opening our hearts to one another with honesty and candor.

I believe that together we have a powerful story to tell. And that gives me hope. That is why I am here.

As I discerned whether to return to Grace Church, it was clear to me that we could not simply return to doing the work we had been doing—however good, however important. There's more. Having been through the experience of this year, Grace Church can say and do things that no other church can say or do. Grace Church is able to make a unique witness to the mercy of God—and, ultimately, we can show how mercy leads to true belonging.

This community has paid a price this year. And yet I believe that the painful cost of this year makes Grace Church a credible witness to the gospel. We can speak with an authority that few other communities have. When we talk about grace here, we mean it. We are willing to do the hard work necessary to live together in a way that is marked by God's mercy and unconditional love.

Our task, in the weeks and months and years ahead, will be to tell our story. We have to learn how to talk about this year as a moment in our history and not as the totality of it. And we have to learn how to share the lessons of this year—insights about compassion, forgiveness, connection, and healing.

Terrible as this time has been, there was also undeniably beauty and redemption in it. Our job is to allow that beauty and redemption to shine through us, so that Grace Church can be a beacon to those who struggle under the weight of sin and shame.

Of course I have fear in this moment. But I have far more hope. God has given us one another, and God has given us new work to do. I am glad to get started.

Yours in Christ,
Anne+





In This Issue

From Mother Anne Turner.....	2
On the Mind of Father Santiago.....	5
From Mother Emma.....	6
Ops & Comm.....	7
Music Notes from Alain.....	8
Grace Episcopal School.....	9
Vestry View.....	10
Campus Matters.....	13
Financial Matters.....	14
Adult Forum Schedule.....	15
Con los años que me quedan.....	16
Seminarian Summers, Noah and Addie.....	17
Grace Church Food Pantry.....	19
Diocesan News.....	20
Blast from the Past.....	21
Vestry Stewardship Campaign.....	21
Photo Essay: ShrineMont.....	23
Photo Essay: Acolyte Festival.....	25
Photo Essay: Little Church.....	26
An Occasional Word.....	28
To Grow Ever Closer to God and One Another.....	30
Why Grace?.....	32
Family Fun Coloring Page.....	34
Family Challenge Activity.....	35
Grace Leadership.....	36

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 December 1. Articles and photos should be emailed to 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*).

On the Mind of Father Santiago



THE REV. SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ,
ASSOCIATE RECTOR

Looking forward with grace requires us to first look back with peace, gratitude, and maybe even a little humor. After all, if we don't make peace with the past, it tends to sneak up on us, just when we're trying to focus on something shiny and new!

As we near the end of the liturgical year, we're on the cusp of transition. In just a few weeks, we'll celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, reflecting on the themes of Christ's reign and the end of time. Then, Advent will usher in the new season and, with it, the anticipation of Christ's coming—not just in the manger but also at the end of days.

This time of year is all about preparation—looking forward with expectation, wonder, and maybe even a little trepidation. But here's the key: to truly move forward with grace, we need to let go of what's holding us back. We need to lean into the truth that everything—yes, everything—is grace. Every bump in the road, every misstep, every joy and sorrow is a gift. Hard to believe sometimes, right?

To look ahead without the burden of anxiety, we need a deep, heartfelt sense of God's presence with us now, and a trust that God's got us covered, even in the things we can't control. That's the real secret. So how do we get there?

First, we make peace with the past. Easier said than done, I know. But let's be honest—how many of us have spent sleepless nights fighting with the “should've, could've, would've” narratives of our lives? Spoiler alert: they never win.

The times I've wished I could rewrite history were often the times I heard God whispering, “Let it go already.” The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said the wandering Israelites teach us a valuable lesson: accept the past as it is, because God can only work with the present—that is how we move forward. The more we cling to what “should have been,” the harder it is to see the grace in what is.

Looking back with gratitude allows us to see how God has been with us all along—even in the moments that didn't go according to our grand plans. And when we make peace with what's behind us, we create space to move forward without dragging our baggage along.

With that peace, we can step into the future with open hands, ready to receive whatever comes next. We can look at the world with renewed trust, seeing God's care for us in every moment. Making peace with the past also gives us the emotional room to face whatever's ahead, allowing us to hold both the joy and complexity of life with grace.

And in that stillness—when we're no longer fighting ghosts of the past—we can hear God's gentle whispers calling us forward. We can be present to the beauty around us, connect with our community, and embrace the future with hope. So, let's leave behind what we can't change, open our hearts to what's ahead, and look forward—with grace, wonder, and maybe a little laughter along the way.



From Mother Emma

THE REV. EMMA BRICE,

ASSISTANT RECTOR FOR FAMILY MINISTRIES & GRACE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

Refreshed and Renewed through Baptism

On the days when I feel hopeless and overwhelmed, the sacrament of baptism is what calls me back into faith—again and again and again. I am drawn in by the way a baby's eyes shoot open as water splashes their forehead. I am drawn in by the echoing "WE WILL!" as our congregation proclaims to support one another in faith. I am drawn in by the intermingling of past and future, broken and beloved, death and resurrection.

In her book *Searching for Sunday*, author Rachel Held Evans writes, "Baptism reminds us that there's no ladder to holiness to climb, no self-improvement plan to follow. It's just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt, and our despair."

Through baptism, God refreshes and renews us time and time again. We get to dwell in a ceaseless cycle of confession and absolution. Sometimes I like to imagine the holy waters of baptism moving through the water cycle I learned about in grade school science class. We bless the water on a Sunday, then it evaporates and fills the clouds and rains back down on us. Or maybe it pours into the earth and slowly travels into our waterways and oceans. The waters of baptism flow all around us whether we notice them or not.



As we look to our future at Grace, we do not need to have all the answers right now. Rather, we need to lean in to the live-giving waters of baptism that quench our thirst and cleanse our hearts. We need to submerge ourselves in the waters of love and emerge as beacons of hope. Indeed, baptism is the very foundation from which all of our future ministries grow.

Just look at our baptismal covenant (Book of Common Prayer, p. 304-5):

- Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?
- Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever [not if, but whenever] you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
- Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
- Will you seek and serve Christ in **all** persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- Will you strive for justice and peace among **all** people, and respect the dignity of **every human being**?

These five questions and the five proclamations of "I will, with God's help" are the foundation of our community and our work as followers of Christ. They are also the foundations of Grace Church and grace (lowercase "g"). To look forward with grace is to look forward with baptism.

OPS & COMM

Operations & Communication @ Grace

KEVIN HAMILTON,

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATION



One of the benefits of having a job in a church is that on those days when my to-do list is a bit longer than usual or the day's tasks seem to be greater than the strength of my coffee, I can get away for a few moments to recenter and reboot in the nave. As light pours through the stained-glass windows, bathing the stonework and wood with vibrant colors, it mingles with the quiet hush of the space to nurture peaceful reflection.

As I look around the nave, I think about the people who saw the space before it existed. Before one brick was laid, one stone was placed, one beam of wood was hoisted, there were people who saw what could be. These were the people of Grace prior to 3601 Russell Road. They had a vision for the space that we now enjoy and, because they chose to look forward with grace and not backward, we get to enjoy a beautiful campus that provides a place for this community of faith to thrive.

I also think about all the people who have sat in the pews over the years. They may have come to Grace long after the building was here, but they have looked forward with grace and saw the good that they could do here within their own unique calling. Maybe they weren't here to lay a cornerstone, but they have stepped forward to volunteer to make a difference in the lives of those in need in the community, to serve at the altar to help people connect with God in the liturgy, to provide Christian formation opportunities for those seeking growth, or one of the many other ways parishioners make a difference.



As we look forward with Grace to the days, weeks, months, and years ahead, it is my goal to continue to support the amazing people of Grace Church as you continue to be a beacon of hope in a world that can at times feel disconnected or hurried. While many of these tasks are behind the scenes, it is my hope that they provide organization and processes that support the greater work of the parish. From wrapping up the years' long phase one of database clean up, to tackling multiple campus-related initiatives and repairs, and creating operational efficiencies and streamlining processes, we are creating and reinforcing systems that hopefully support the amazing things you are doing.

This last year taught me so much about Grace church. You are an amazing people with a unique and clearly compelling call to carry on the good work of those who came before you. It is obvious that you desire to leave a strong and vibrant community of faith for all those who come behind you. You have some amazing days ahead. Will they be easy? No. Will they require hard work? You had better believe it. Will they be worth it? Absolutely! Looking forward to journeying with you!

DR. ALAIN TRUCHE,
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Music Notes from Alain



Looking Forward to Inspiring Choral Services

**Choral Evensong for the Feast of All Souls on November 3 at 5 pm –
Reception will follow - Prelude starts at 4:40 pm**

The choir will sing “And I Saw a New Heaven” written by English composer Edward Bainton. Its text is taken from the opening verses of Revelation, Chapter 21, where John speaks of his awe at seeing the new heaven and new earth. The imagery of Revelation is exceptionally rich: the sea, that had been home to the Beast of Revelation (Revelation 13:1), is no more; there is no more death, no more pain, “for the old things are passed away.” Apart from the words of Jesus that are spoken from his throne, his words that proclaim, “Behold,” in the holy city, the new Jerusalem, “The tabernacle of God is with men,” Bainton’s setting of this memorable text is warm and contemplative. Written in 1928, “And I Saw a New Heaven” has achieved status as one of the most beloved and frequently performed of all choral anthems, both in England and the United States. They will also sing a setting of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by English composer Herbert Sumson I am particularly fond of. The Gloria Patri section (“Glory be to the Father and to the Son...”) is very exciting and poignant. Let the beautiful harmonies of our choir transport you into a sacred space of reflection and remembrance. Experience the timeless beauty of this ancient service, featuring beloved hymns and anthems. As we gather to honor the lives of those who have gone before us, let us find solace and peace in the comforting presence of our faith. All are welcome to attend this special service. A reception will follow the evensong.

Advent Lessons and Carols with Eucharist on December 8th at 5 pm

The choir is presenting the annual Advent Lessons and Carols with Eucharist. Come and enjoy traditional advent hymns and carols by celebrated composers such as Elizabeth Poston and John Ireland and traditional carols such as “This is the truth sent from above.”

Music Fund Donations

I would like to invite you to entertain the idea of supporting the music ministry by donating money to the Music Fund. This money supports expenses that are outside of the operating budget. For example, in the near future, some of the handbell handles need to be replaced. This type of expense does not fall under the operating budget. Additionally, in March, I have scheduled the choir to sing an anthem by John Rutter that has a major clarinet accompaniment. The money spent on a clarinetist comes from the Music Fund. The brass quintet that plays for Easter is also covered by the Music Fund (in the DMV area one brass player is paid \$750; so a quintet costs \$3750).

The money donated to the Music Fund will not only enable the church to host future concerts but also serve as a valuable outreach to the community. These concerts will benefit both our congregation and our neighbors. On behalf of the church, I am thankful for your support.



As we enter a season of Thanksgiving, we at Grace School are so grateful for the many talents of our faculty, staff, students, and parents who make our community such a wonderful place. Now well into our school year, our students have hit their stride, and our classroom communities are filled with learning and joy.

What kind of learning?, you may ask. We are so proud of the READERS our students have become and their passion for all kinds of books. Our students are growing as AGILE MATHEMATICIANS through our Math in Focus curriculum where students use a concrete—pictorial—abstract approach to math challenges. SCIENTISTS abound—even among our littlest who can talk to you about habitats and the lifecycle of a plant. On any given day, you may see budding LINGUISTS enjoying Spanish, healthy ATHLETES taking part in sports modules, and enthusiastic PERFORMERS who are rehearsing for the National Episcopal Schools Day Celebration at the National Cathedral. If you walk the school hallways, the talents of our in-house ARTISTS will guide your way. Learning and growing is taking shape in every area of school life.

But what about the joy? Why yes, we have it in abundance! The joy of classroom parties and parades at Halloween, dance-a-thons to spread breast cancer awareness; and time with friends during recess. We have enjoyed numerous field trips and assemblies to include virtual art lessons from Kyle Tiernan and an outreach visit to the residents at Small House, a part of the Goodwin House community.

As we reflect on our experiences this year, we are reminded of the strength of our community and the shared commitment to fostering a nurturing environment for our students. Thank you to all the faculty, staff, church staff and members, and parents who contribute their time, energy, and creativity to make each day at Grace School a meaningful one.

As we move into this season of Thanksgiving, let's continue to celebrate our achievements and the wonderful community we've built. May this time be filled with gratitude, joy, and cherished moments with family and friends. Wishing everyone a happy and restful Thanksgiving!



Vestry View



MARY LEWIS HIX,
SENIOR WARDEN

Why is it that I am inclined to look back as I contemplate what will unfold in God's future? Perhaps it is because of recent communication with Evan Robinson and the reminder of a nugget of Grace's past. While he was treasurer, Evan inventoried the Grace Church lockbox and found the historic 1947 "Financial Guarantee" letter, in which Grace Church members pledged to fund the construction of the new church on Russell Road beyond what the banks were willing to loan. The letter contains the signatures of members who believed in the future, who believed that it was important to move the church from Old Town Alexandria to the Russell Road location. Some of the names on the letter are familiar and descendants still call Grace their church home.

And what do I see today? Today Grace is a community living our mission to Love, Proclaim, and Serve God. On Sunday we proclaim in five worship services, with Rite 1 and 2 said services, Spanish liturgy, Little Church, and a choral Eucharist. La Gracia participants increase in number while Little Church draws young families to worship. As children prepare the altar, make joyful noise with rhythm instruments, and wander about, they are valued. Acolytes, LEMS, lectors, ushers: all together create the Sunday worship experience. The choir reminds us that those who sing pray twice. christian education occurs for all ages in the age-old quest toward discipleship. And the live stream crew allows friends and family to worship from afar.

Moreover, Grace is a seven-day-a-week hub of Christian love. Learning and fun vibrate in the classrooms of Grace Episcopal School. Food pantry volunteers prepare grocery distributions for the neighbors who come to our doors two evenings a week. Choirs prepare the lilting music that is integral to Sunday worship. The Altar Guild ensures the beauty of worship. Study groups delve into their faith and some fiction. Brown bag volunteers assemble lunches to feed the hungry in Alexandria. Committees meet. The Thursday daily service provides sustenance for a faithful few. Clergy and laity plan, prepare, provide.

Yet this is an accounting of the present at Grace, without a vision of what the future might provide. I look with joy to stability in our community and trust that God's future promises more that we can hope or imagine. And this is a time of contemplating the financial implications of hope and imagination. Just as the families in 1947 committed to a future home in which to worship and find community, I dream of the financial generosity of the Grace community to allow bold steps into the future. To this end I pledge and tithe my time, talent, and treasure to God's unfolding purposes. Past, present, future: faithful witness to our belief and pursuance of Jesus' teachings to *Love, Proclaim, and Serve God*.

August 23, 1947

Board of Directors
Citizens National Bank
Alexandria, Va.

Gentlemen:

We the undersigned, members of Grace Church, Alexandria, Virginia, do hereby agreed that in the event additional money is needed to complete our new church over and above the loan from the Citizens National Bank that we will guarantee that such additional money will be raised or provided from our membership and that the Citizens National Bank will not be asked to provide additional funds.

William C. Cunningham

William C. Cunningham

Charles D. Pulman

Charles D. Pulman (Treasurer)

Arthur M. King

Arthur M. King

Laura V. King

Laura V. King

Elizabeth A. Reeves

Elizabeth A. Reeves

Mrs. Fred Ayers

Mrs. Fred Ayers

Mrs. Leonara Fugitt

Mrs. Leonara Fugitt

Mrs. Anne E. Estes

Mrs. Anne E. Estes

Mrs. Margaret S. Henderson

Mrs. Margaret S. Henderson

Mr. James R. Henderson

Mr. James R. Henderson

Geneva Paige Morgan

Geneva Paige Morgan

Georgie Fuggett

Georgie Fuggett

Jane C. Keller

Jane C. Keller

Mattie Montague

Mattie Montague

Mrs. Marion R. Rice

Mrs. Marion R. Rice

Norman E. Simpson

Norman E. Simpson

Effie M. Wilkinson

Effie M. Wilkinson

Bernice Whitestone

Bernice Whitestone

Mildred Poindexter

Mildred Poindexter

F. L. Plitt Sr.	F. L. Plitt, Sr..
James M. Duncan	James M. Duncan
Ralph A. Sentman	Ralph A. Sentman
Raymond Astryke	Raymond Astryke
Walter C. Davis	Walter C. Davis
Clarence C. Shaffer	Clarence C. Shaffer
Anna P. McDowell	Anna P. McDowell
Marjorie N. Matter	Marjorie N. Matter
Mrs. Thomas Peyton	Mrs. Thomas Peyton
Jean E. Peyton	Jean E. Peyton
A. Maurice Simpson	A. Maurice Simpson
George B. Simms	George B. Simms
J. L. Schroyer	J. L. Schroyer
J. Aubrey Matter	J. Aubrey Matter
James C. Bruin	James C. Bruin



Campus Matters

ERIC WASKOWICZ, JUNIOR WARDEN



Elevator

Keeping an old elevator running is expensive! We are requesting bids to replace the main elevator at our next opportunity— which is summer of 2025. This work will be supported by funds designated for accessibility provided in memory of Cleve Corlett.

Creation Care

This newly created group has proposed three steps forward to stop adding to greenhouse emissions and improve the ecological health of our facilities and grounds.

1. Conduct an energy audit and implement efficiency solutions: Engage an outside firm to assess the church's energy usage and identify opportunities for improvement.
2. Develop a Creation Care plan for Grace Church grounds: Promote and implement a plan to enhance the ecological health of the church grounds.
3. Examine consumption patterns and habits: Do everything we can around the Church to minimize waste, decrease use of single-use plastics.

Gardens

There's a small group of gardeners meeting once a month on the far side of the parking lot to clear out ivy and fill in with native plants like redbud and white snakeroot. Check in with Barbara Ramm, Ben Kong, or Eric Waskowicz if you want to join us on a Saturday morning.

Railing on Sidewalk

The railing on the sidewalk between the library and the glass doors was starting to get pretty shabby, with plenty of rust and loose paint. Fixed!



Ivy clearing project underway

FOR MORE ON CREATION CARE:

The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia's Creation Care Committee offers the nine-week program, [Love God, Love God's World](https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/). The national Episcopal Church developed this course about caring for our planet. It is structurally similar to Sacred Ground. Link is : <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/creation-care/love-god-love-gods-world-curriculum/>

The first session met via Zoom on Monday, October 28; it will meet every other week. For more information, contact Deacon Salli Hartman at sjhinva@gmail.com. *-information shared by Liz Rugaber*



Financial Matters

Good Financial Security Tips from the Finance Team at Grace: Avoiding Scams

Strange phone calls, suspicious links, and mysterious messages—oh my! Scams are all around us, and we want to be careful with our financial information, especially online. This issue of Grace Notes, the finance team gives you some scam tactics to watch out for:

1

Fake emails and accounts

Scammers will use account names and email addresses that mimic the organization's legitimate email addresses or accounts, but do not exactly match. If you receive a suspicious email, check to see if the email address is from the organization. Emails from Grace Church only come from @gracealex.org emails and are listed on the website under each clergy or staff member.

Suspicious Links, Special Offers, and Pressure Tactics

If it seems too good to be true, it probably is! Offers advertised as special or limited opportunities are often ploys to get you to click on a suspicious link or provide financial information. Scammers can often use pressure tactics, stating an offer requires immediate action. Make sure links are from a trusted source and if you are in doubt, don't click!

2

3

Spam texts or messages

Be cautious of texts or messages from unknown sources. Organizations and businesses use official channels to communicate with their customers, so double check the source of any communication.

When in doubt, check it out!

You can always reach out to an organization or business directly if you are suspicious of an offer or communication. Scammers are always trying to improve their tactics, so be cautious about your financial information and how you share it with others.

4

Adult Forum Schedule for November

By Anne Clift Boris

Adult Forum will meet 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). Topics and formats vary from week to week. Those already scheduled for the next month are:

November 3	Grace at Work: Welcoming the Stranger	<i>Jennifer Ibanez Whitlock and Fr. Santiago Rodriguez</i>
November 10	Grace at Work: 43 Years as a Scientist	<i>Bill Eckel</i>
November 17	Grace at Work: Healing Therapy	<i>Hannah Sternberg and Mindy Van Wart</i>
November 24	Creation Care: Next Steps at Grace	<i>Eric Waskowicz</i>
December 1	Intergenerational Event (Advent Wreaths) in Merrow Hall	NO SEPARATE ADULT FORUM
December 8	Christmas Away From Home	<i>John Boris, Dan Pattarini, and other parishioners</i>
December 15	Creches from Around the World at the Washington National Cathedral	Anne Clift Boris
December 22-29	CHRISTMAS BREAK	NO ADULT FORUM OR SUNDAY SCHOOL

ADULT FORUM - CALL FOR PRESENTERS FOR 2025

In 2025, Adult Forum will continue with this year's "Grace at Work" series, in which parishioners share how they live out their faith in their work lives, either in their choice of profession or in how they relate to their colleagues and clients. We will also have a discussion of books that have been meaningful to us at some point in the early spring. If you would like to present in either (or both!), or if you have any suggestions for subjects you'd like to see covered in adult forum, please contact Anne Clift Boris via [email](#).



FATHER SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ, ASSOCIATE RECTOR

Con los años que me quedan

En su canción, Con los años que me quedan, la canta-autora Cubano-Americana Gloria Estefan nos recuerda que en la vida y en el amor tenemos que hacer la paz con nuestros pasados. Mirar hacia el futuro con gracia nos pide primero hacer las paces con el pasado, con gratitud, y quizás con un poco de humor. Si no, el pasado tiene la mala costumbre de aparecer justo cuando intentamos enfocarnos en algo nuevo y brillante.

Estamos terminando el año litúrgico, en un momento de transición. En unas semanas celebraremos la Fiesta de Cristo Rey, pensando en su reinado y en el fin de los tiempos. Después, el Adviento llegará con la expectativa de la venida de Cristo, no solo en el pesebre, sino también en su regreso final.

Este es un tiempo de preparación, de mirar hacia adelante con esperanza, asombro y, tal vez, un poquito de anticipación. Pero aquí está la clave: para avanzar de verdad con gracia, tenemos que soltar lo que nos pesa. Necesitamos abrazar la verdad de que todo – sí, todo – es gracia. Cada obstáculo, cada error, cada alegría y cada lágrima es un regalo. Parece difícil de aceptar, ¿verdad?

Para mirar al futuro sin ansiedad, necesitamos sentir la presencia de Dios ahora y confiar en que Él nos cuida, incluso en lo que no podemos controlar. ¿Cómo logramos eso?

Primero, hacemos las paces con el pasado. Fácil de decir, complicado de hacer, lo sé. Pero, seamos honestos: ¿cuántas veces nos hemos desvelado pensando en lo que deberíamos haber hecho? Les tengo una noticia: esas peleas nunca ganan. En los momentos que he querido reescribir mi historia, siempre he escuchado a Dios susurrándome: “Déjalo ya.” Dios siempre me invita a aceptar el pasado tal como es, porque Dios trabaja en el presente. Y así es como avanzamos.

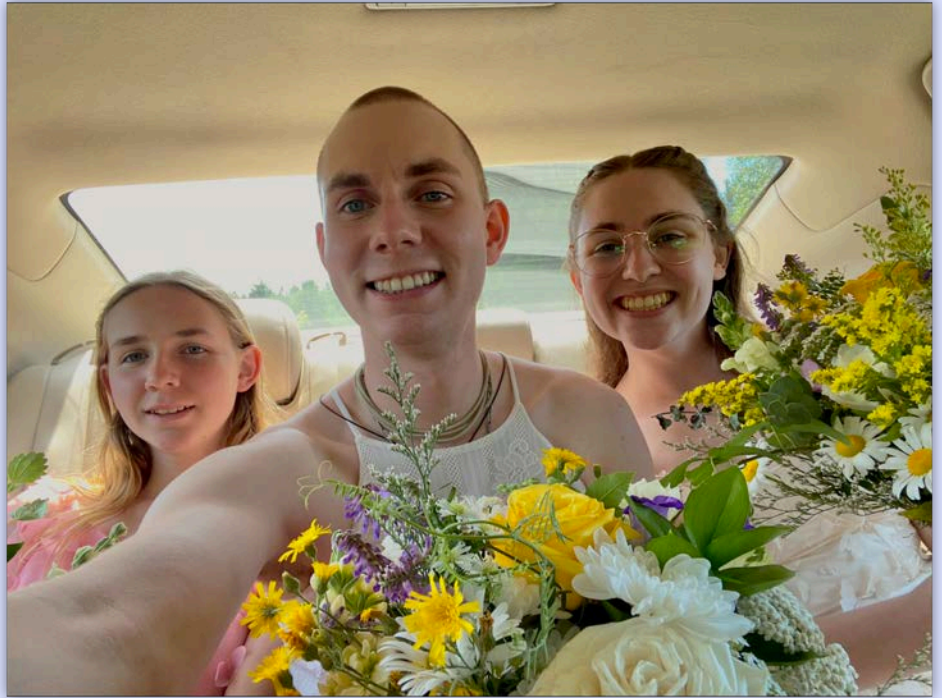
Cuando soltamos el pasado, creamos espacio para seguir adelante. Podemos mirar al futuro con las manos abiertas, listos para recibir lo que venga. Hacer las paces con lo que ha sido nos da espacio emocional para enfrentar lo que está por venir, con todo su gozo y complejidad. Podemos decirle a Dios, “Con los años que me quedan, voy a aceptar que todo es gracia.”

Cuando vivimos sin pelear con los fantasmas del pasado, escuchamos los suaves susurros de Dios que nos llaman hacia adelante. Conectamos con nuestra comunidad, abrazamos el futuro con esperanza, y, ¿por qué no?, también con una sonrisa. Dejemos atrás lo que no podemos cambiar, abramos el corazón a lo que viene, y miremos hacia adelante – con gracia, asombro y tal vez una carcajada en el camino. Con los años que nos quedan, aprendamos a mirar al futuro con gracia.

How I spent my summer...

I began this summer as I did the summer before: tired. For too long I've romanticized the nasty habit of over-extending myself. I find a sense of self-worth in what I do academically, in the parish, at my jobs, in student government, on committees, and before I know it, I've overcommitted. And in my pride, I don't want to let go of all the things I've signed up for. It often takes that radical shift in my daily rhythm that summer brings to jolt me out of my chronic 'busybodiness'.

As all the school-year programming came to a halt, my energy shifted to the rhythmic, albeit tiring work of bartending and serving at my "secular" jobs (for lack of a better term). I also began to work at the Falls Church Episcopal as assistant director of their Vacation Bible School (VBS) program. I took on the task of painting a mural in preparation for the VBS. I've never done an art project on such a large scale before, and it took far more time than either I or my supervisor anticipated. It forced me to slow down, to channel energy creatively, and to be patient with myself. In the midst of VBS prep, I traveled with my family to New Brunswick for my sister's wedding. This was also my first time spent with my parents and youngest sister since their move from Albania to the United States in May.



The hours painting in solitude (a solitude deepened by limited communication capacity due to phone issues) contrasted with the very physical, embodied acts of ebiking to and from Falls Church and engaging in service industry labor, and all this combined with reconnecting with family, resulted in a uniquely contemplative summer. I spent a lot of one-on-one time with God, in prayer, in silence, pedaling up and down the highway in 90+ degree weather, humming hymns, running out of breath to hum hymns, reflecting on my family life and where I come from—and imagining where I might be headed.

The day after VBS ended, I interviewed for postulancy and am now a postulant! But in my interview, I reflected on my realization this summer that I still have a lot to learn about myself, about balance, and about reminding my heart that the hope that sustains me isn't in my own strength, the things I do, my roles, etc., but in the God who sustains and renews all things, whose voice is often heard most clearly when I slow down. On the one hand, there's knowing all that, and on the other hand, there's doing it. I'm still working on that second part, but already this semester, I've said no to something and at least three times I've said, "Let me think about that before I commit." And that's growth! I'm blessed by the abundant grace I've been shown at Grace as that learning, and growing, and becoming continue, and I'm delighted to be back for a second year.

— Noah Aukerman

How I spent my summer...

Hi! You may not know me, but you may have emailed me! My name is Addie, and I am a senior at VTS and have been assisting behind-the-scenes at Grace part-time for over two years! I assist with putting together the bulletins for worship each week, creating the weekly e-blasts you get from the Church, and updating the website. If you've ever submitted an announcement to run in the bulletins, you've emailed me! Until this summer, you emailed Addie Tapp to get your news shared with the parish, but I spent my summer getting married! So the next time you have an exciting event or announcement to share with the parish, you'll email Addie Budnick! My husband Tyler and I pop into Grace most Sundays to one of the services - come say hello!



- Addie Budnick

The Grace Church Food Pantry



Twenty-five dedicated Grace Church members descended on a truck full of food pantry donations and cleared eleven pallets in just 60 minutes on Saturday, October 12. Such excellence in food pantry stocking is what we experience as God's grace. Special thanks to all who made it happen. We could never have done it without you!

Diocesan News



by Doug Prince

Pathways to Prayers Established via Lilly Endowment

The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia has been awarded a grant of \$1,248,768 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to establish the Pathways to Prayer and Practice Initiative. This program is part of Lilly Endowment's Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative, which aims to help Christian congregations engage children more fully in corporate worship and prayer practices. The Pathways to Prayer and Practice project will create a framework to guide congregations and families in the meaningful engagement of children in corporate worship across the Diocese of Virginia.

The initiative will involve establishing a training laboratory called The Pathways Institute, where participating congregations will experiment with new practices to involve families in the church, recruit leaders, welcome the marginalized, and shift church culture to fully embrace children in worship. The project will focus on five primary areas of worship: scripture, prayer, Eucharist, music, and sacred spaces. Congregations participating in the institute cohorts will receive sub-grants to assist in implementing their concepts in their churches. The collective learnings from these experiments will lead to the creation of a Pathways Guidebook and other resources for congregations across the diocese and beyond.

The Rt. Rev'd E. Mark Stevenson expressed excitement about the initiative's impact on the diocese, emphasizing the importance of investing in building disciples of Jesus Christ, beginning with children and their families. The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia is one of 91 organizations receiving funding through this initiative, representing a broad spectrum of Christian traditions.

The initiative aligns with the vision of Lilly Endowment Inc., a private philanthropic foundation founded in 1937. The foundation supports community development, education, and religion, with a focus on deepening and enriching the lives of Christians in the United States. Lilly Endowment's vice president for religion, Christopher L. Coble, highlighted the critical role of congregational worship and prayer in children's spiritual growth and the nurturing of faith traditions.

In summary, the Pathways to Prayer and Practice Initiative aims to guide congregations and families in engaging children more fully in corporate worship and prayer practices. Through experimentation, sub-grants, and the creation of resources, the initiative seeks to transform church culture to embrace children in worship and strengthen the faith of both children and adults. This initiative reflects Lilly Endowment's dedication to supporting efforts that enhance congregations' vitality and deepen Christians' lives in the United States.

BLAST FROM THE PAST...



Linda Waskowicz sent in this photo of Eric (our current Junior Warden) with Fr. Edward Merrow following Eric's confirmation. Linda shared that in this photo Fr. Merrow had asked her to serve as Altar Guild President and she was trying to say "NO," which did not work! Fr. Merrow died before she was installed, but he must have had an understanding of her future contributions to the guild--she has been President FOUR times!

We invite you to send in photos of Grace's history as you come across them. Scan them in for best resolution and please try to identify all people and approximate date!

2024 Stewardship Campaign

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:1-2

All parishioners should have received a letter from this year's Stewardship Chairs Mary Stewart and Geoff Whitlock inviting each of us to Walk in Love as we consider our annual pledge to support our parish Looking forward with Grace (the theme of this issue of Grace Notes). If you did not receive a letter, please contact the church office at 703-549-1980.

The letter reminds us that the stewardship theme presents words we hear almost every Sunday, "**Walk in Love** as Christ loved us and gave himself for us...". This is a powerful exhortation to act ("Walk"), and to do so according to the loving and life-giving example of Christ ("in Love"). Each of us walks a unique path: We come from different places; our journeys intersect and diverge in unexpected ways, but these diverse walks, individually and collectively, become unified in love, undivided and ever-present.

Think of the ways we **Walk in Love** in community: worshiping together, gathering for fellowship, serving others, joining together to seek justice. The generosity and sacrifice of each offering are hallmarks of our common life. We **Walk in Love** as we affirm our commitment to God and to one another during this pivotal time in the life of our community, looking, by God's grace, to the future.

The 2024 Stewardship Season asks for our continued strong financial support and commitment to Grace, and our offerings of time and talent. Each and every pledge and act of service, no matter the size, is critical to ensuring that Grace has strong footing to **Walk in Love** together following the Way of Jesus, and Looking Forward with Grace.

We hope everyone received a pledge card with their letter. If not, it is reproduced on the following page. You can print this off, fill it out, and bring it to church on November 10 for the physical ingathering, mail it to the church; scan the QR code; or enter www.gracealex.org/pledge; and pledge online.

So many different ways to **Walk in Love** together.

2024 Stewardship Campaign



Grace Church depends on the financial support of our congregation. Every pledge is important. Please join in supporting the ministries and mission of the church.

Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

Email

In thankful response to God's gifts,
I/we prayerfully pledge

- ☐ Annual support of \$ _____ for 2025.
 - ☐ Please send me offering envelopes for checks and cash.
 - ☐ I pledge to volunteer to serve in church ministries.
 - ☐ I would like information about how to volunteer.
- Here are areas I'm interested in:

Bring this card to church on November 10,
when we will gather and bless the pledges.
You may also return it in the offering plate at any time,
mail it to the parish office, or pledge electronically at

www.gracealex.org/pledge

Grace Episcopal Church

3601 Russell Road, Alexandria, VA, 22305

(703) 549-1980 • www.gracealex.org



Grace Episcopal Church
Stewardship 2025

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Ephesians 5:1-2

Photo Essay: ShrineMont Weekend 2024

How much fun can one parish have with perfect weather and a bunch of fantastic people?



Photo Essay: ShrineMont Weekend Continued

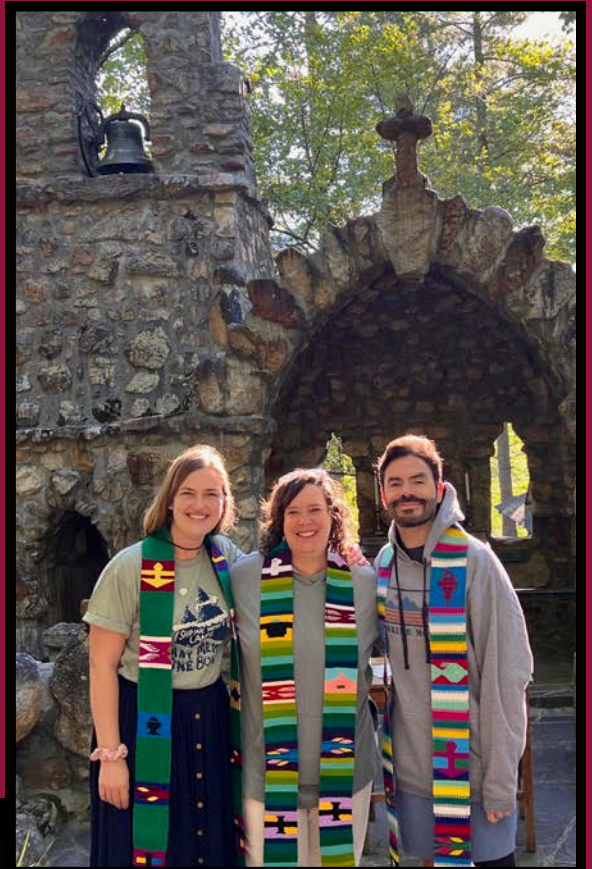


Photo Credit: Grace Church Archives

Photo Essay #2

*The National Acolyte Festival
Washington National Cathedral, October 12, 2024*



Special thanks to John, Annie, Molly, Brynn, Evelyn, Lucy, and Violet for representing Grace!

PHOTO ESSAY #3

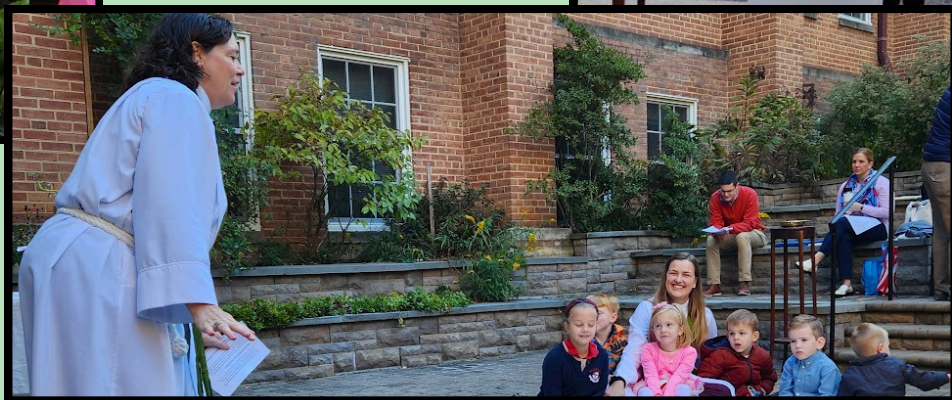
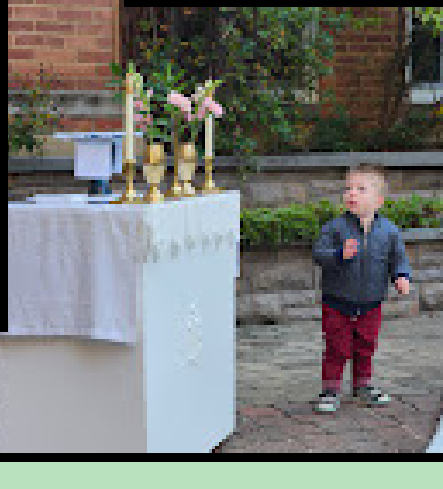


Little Church





Little Church showing off new banners to create sacred space!





Barbara Morris

An Occasional WORD

A Forkful of Love

As a child in the 1930's, I was in awe—and a bit scared—of my mother's fierce-looking cooking fork. It looked deadly with its four gleaming, stainless steel tines, two inches long and as sharp and glittering as needles. When Mother pierced carrots with The Fork, I half expected to hear cries of pain.

Like a deadly weapon, The Fork was kept in a closed drawer out of my reach. I call it a cooking fork because it was almost the only utensil Mother used to cook cheap but wholesome meals for my sister, father, and me in those Depression days.

The Fork, as I've come to think of it, was invaluable when Mother made Dad's favorite meal, Galumpkies, the Polish name for Cabbage Rolls. The Fork neatly and briefly dipped large, stiff, celadon-green cabbage leaves into hot water to soften them enough to roll and tuck around handfuls of mixed ground beef and rice.

And, again, after the cabbage rolls were fully cooked, The Fork, partnered with a large serving spoon, tidily and safely lifted the steaming hot rolls onto our dinner plates. Their rich, moist aroma made us groan with pleasure.

It wasn't only carrots that, to my ears, cried in pain. Frying liver actually screeched when Mother pressed blood red slabs of it into the sizzling heat of her heavy iron frying pan. When the pierced and pressed liver screamed and oozed out a froth of tiny butter bubbles around its edges, I covered my ears and ran from the kitchen.

When Mother stabbed The Fork deeply into baking potatoes to test their soft centers, it released a mini puff of steam and the faintest hint of an earthy aroma. Just one whiff made my mouth water instantly.

Sadly, over years of being washed in a sink full of hot, sudsy water, The Fork's paint began to splinter off. Bright red flakes bobbed in the water and clung to Mother's wet fingers. Over time, the wooden handle softened and decayed. Eventually, to Mother's distress, large shards broke away in her hands, and she actually cried the day that the last fragment crumbled and fell into the sink, leaving a sturdy steel shaft. Young as I was, I felt the air sucked from the kitchen. It was like a death in the family.

A Forkful of Love (continued)

With a heartbroken shrug, Mother turned to show the useless fork to me and Dad before tossing it into the trash bin

But suddenly, Dad got up and, retrieved The Fork. “Maybe I can fix it,” he said. “Let me try.”

And try he did. My sister and I watched, wide-eyed, as Dad collected his supplies and laid them out on newspaper on the kitchen table—a huge, heavy hammer, rusty pliers and a tangle of thick, dull wire that he had been saving “just in case.”

For the next few nights, Dad struggled to straighten the ball of wire, yanking and jerking it apart inch by inch, then hammering it as straight as possible. Then came the task of winding the wire around the steel shaft. With his right hand he clasped the wire with the pliers, while his left hand, protected by a pot holder, held the the menacing tines. Time and again, the tines poked through the thin potholder and stabbed Dad’s fingers. Mother begged him to admit the fork was hopeless but Dad persisted. No wonder; my mother loved The Fork, and Dad deeply loved my mother, so somehow he managed to encircle the shaft, with the wire, round and round and round again.

Finally, one evening , with one last twist of wire, Dad finished the task. He had fashioned a rough-hewn wire handle. It had to be held with a potholder, but the tines were still useful---and as fierce as ever.

Mother used Dad’s fork happily for the next 50 years until her death at age 93.

Now I proudly use this misshapen family treasure. It’s perfect for splitting English muffins. Even more, it’s a link to my parents and a sturdy, fierce symbol of their love for one another.



To Grow Ever Closer to God and One Another

By Father Santiago Rodriguez

On December 4, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the dedication of Grace Church's new facilities and columbarium. This milestone is more than just a commemoration of expanded space; it invites us to reflect on the lessons learned and the deeper questions of discernment that guide our future. How is God calling us to love, serve, and proclaim the gospel? How will we continue building God's reign in our neighborhoods in the years to come?

In the early 1990s, Grace Church embarked on a bold building project, driven by the shared belief that we needed to grow in both spirit and space. At the 1990 annual parish meeting, the congregation agreed that expanding our physical plant was necessary to support thriving ministries and meet future needs. The plans not only addressed space for current activities but also included the long-awaited addition of a columbarium, a sacred space for remembrance.

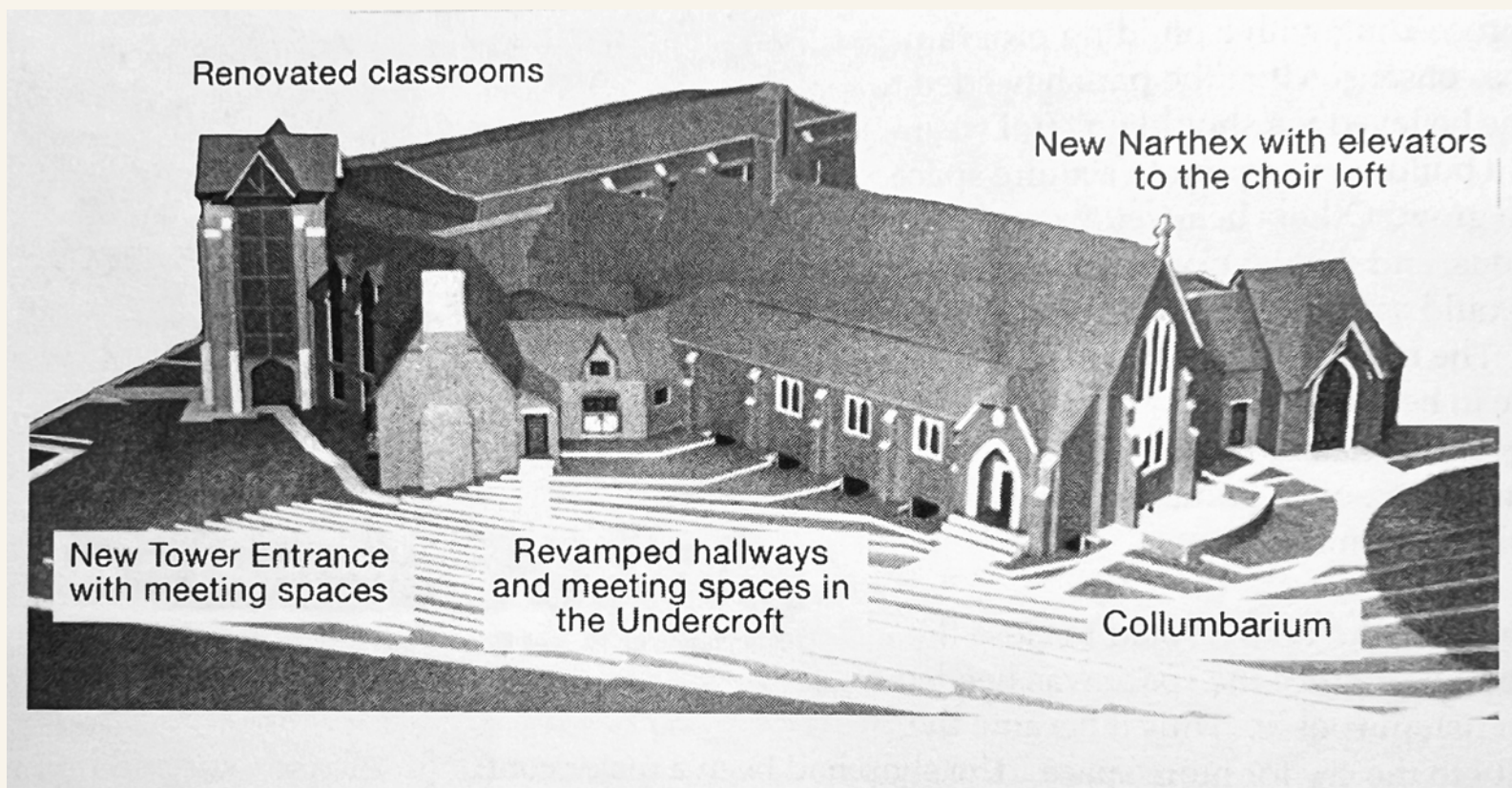
In 1991, the long-range planning committee and the building committee initiated detailed studies and sketches for a new two-story building to provide 14,000 square feet of much-needed space between Merrow Hall and the rectory. However, the year felt stagnant as plans were refined but progress was slow. By 1992, momentum picked up when the vestry approved a \$1.8 million budget, and the architectural firm Cole and Denny joined the project. Construction officially began in August 1993, despite rising costs that escalated to \$2.8 million by the end of the year.

Amidst the practical challenges of construction, the heart of the church remained alive and engaged. In 1995, the Episcopal Young Churchmen (EYC), high school members of the parish, delivered a heartfelt letter at the annual meeting. They reminded us all that the real "building" of Grace Church wasn't about the walls we were constructing, but about reigniting the spirit of love, connection, and community. "We want Grace Church to be one big family," they declared. "In our families, we know each other's names, we grow together, and we break bread together."

Their message was a call to remember that our true mission isn't about structures but about relationships, and that growth must be guided by our values. Alongside the building efforts, new guilds were formed to care for the expanded space, and policies were put in place to manage the new facilities. Despite the financial challenges, including budget cuts to some programs, the parish's passion and commitment carried the project through to its completion in December 1994.

As we plan for the future, we are reminded that discernment is more than just making decisions about buildings. It's about listening for the deeper questions God is asking us. What is our mission? How can we live more fully into our values? Will our budget and our buildings help us to love and serve the wider community?

Building projects are not just about walls and foundations—they are invitations to grow, both in spirit and in purpose. They call us to align our hands and hearts with God's greater vision for who we are becoming as a community. As we look to the future, let us pray that we embrace these moments of discernment as sacred opportunities to love and serve in all things. To love and serve God with greater authenticity. To love and serve with deeper devotion and creative courage. May our journey forward be one of faith, shaped by the Spirit's call to grow ever closer to God and one another.



Why Grace?

by Jason Holleran



Why Grace? It's because the timing couldn't have been better.

I became acquainted with Grace Episcopal Church in the late summer of 2023, after meeting my girlfriend and fellow parishioner Colleen McArdelle. Colleen moved to Northern Virginia from New York in 2022, started attending services at Grace, and eventually was confirmed during the Easter Vigil service in 2023.

Not long after we met and started dating in the middle of August of that year, she told me, "I go to Grace Episcopal Church every Sunday. You don't have to go with me, but I'm going." This was intriguing, because I had been without a church after moving to Virginia from Maryland in 2021. At that time, I had occasionally been attending masses at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Parish in Gaithersburg, MD (my boyhood home), where my father Bill served as a rotating lector. Wanting to try something different, I began attending Grace with Colleen and was wowed by the overwhelming sense of camaraderie, inclusion, and faith. After one such service, I was asked by a parishioner if I ever considered joining the choir. Having sung in a couple of choirs during elementary school, I thought, "Why not give it a try?" I got in touch with Dr. Alain Truche, Director of Music at Grace, and was accepted as a member of the bass section. It felt satisfying and fulfilling that I was contributing to the church in this way.

Judging by what I was about to experience, though, I knew I needed Grace's presence—not to mention God's love and healing—more than ever.

My cell phone rang on November 2, 2023. It was my mother. She heard from one of my Dad's colleagues, who was with him while waiting to attend a conference in Washington, DC, that he had collapsed from a heart attack.

He did not survive.

Going through the subsequent holiday season without my father was especially difficult. However, in addition to my family being there for each other—especially my mother—plus the never-ending support from Colleen, there was another entity that helped me through it all: Grace Episcopal Church. The clergy's healing prayers following the 10:30 am service on Sundays were especially welcomed and helped me tremendously. This culminated in my acceptance into the Episcopal Church during the Easter Vigil service on March 30, 2024, where it was a great honor to meet Bishop James "Bud" Shand.

Little did I know that Grace would continue to be integral to my well-being.

Why Grace? Continued from page

After attending Grace's annual picnic following the June 2, 2024, service, I felt pain in my chest as I walked to my car. I went to the hospital, was quickly admitted, and several tests revealed that I had suffered an NSTEMI, or a non-ST-elevated myocardial infarction, a type of heart attack. When it was determined that a stent procedure wouldn't be adequate to fix the blockages I had in three locations, it was decided for me to undergo a triple coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) procedure.

Despite a successful surgery, I had to return to the hospital after my discharge in mid-June because one of the grafting sites became infected. Cue another hospital stay from late June to early July to clear the infection out.

Guess what helped me recover from these surgeries? If you said "Grace," you'd be correct. In fact, in addition to visits from my family and Colleen, Father Santi and Dr. Truche took time out of their schedules to visit me in the hospital, and I received well wishes in the form of cards from members of the choir and other parishioners as well.

Now, I'm fully recovered from these procedures and continuing to participate with the choir at Grace each Sunday. I can never forget the ways that the clergy and congregation helped me, from the private visitations to the overall feelings of faith, healing, and love that its weekly services bring, and I return those favors by continuing to Love, Proclaim, and Serve God in the form of song.

Thank you, Grace Church, for everything you've done for me and for others!



Jason in the choir loft



Bishop Bud Shand and Jason at Easter Vigil






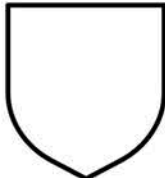

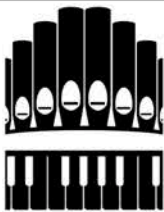


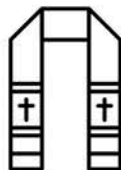











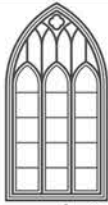


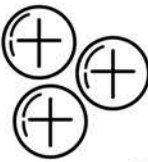



Family Challenge Activity

Family Activity: I Spy ...

Bring this page to church on any Sunday and see how many you can find!



 Altar	 Dove	 Choir	 Church Banner	 Baptismal Font
 Organ	 Bulletin	 Acolytes	 Stole	 Hymnal
 Jesus	 Cross	 Chalice	 Pulpit	 Offering Plates
 Candle	 Pew	 Guitar	 Altar Flowers	 People
 Stained Glass	 Prayer Book	 Kneeler Pad	 Communion Bread	 Bible



Parish Staff

Noah Aukerman
Seminarian
naukerman@vts.edu

Betsy Bamford
Jane Avery
Nursery Workers

The Rev. Emma Brice
Assistant Rector for Family Ministries & GES Chaplain
emma.brice@gracealex.org

Addie Budnick
Communications Support
announcements@gracealex.org

Mary Cyrus
Financial Administrator
financial.administrator@gracealex.org

Kevin Hamilton
Director of Operations & Communication
kevin.hamilton@gracealex.org

Pedro Hernandez
Amorita Quintanilla
Sextons

Amanda Hungerford
Interim Head of Grace Episcopal School
ahungerford@graceschoolalex.org

Madeline Manaker
Finance Assistant
madeline.manaker@gracealex.org

The Rev. Santiago Rodriguez
Associate Rector
santiago.rodriguez@gracealex.org

The Rev. Deacon Ignacio Solano Gómez
Seminarian
isolanogomez@vts.edu

Dr. Alain Truche
Director of Music
alain.truche@gracealex.org

The Rev. Dr. Anne Michele Turner
Rector
anne.turner@gracealex.org

Vestry Class of 2024

Khacki Berry, Youth Formation Liaison
Lauren Gustafson, GES Board Member
Mary Hix, Senior Warden
Dan Pattarini, Evangelism Liaison
Rushad Thomas, Children's Formation Liaison

Vestry Class of 2025

Keith Davis, Asst Treasurer and Outreach/Justice Liaison
Eleanor Reed, Worship Liaison
Jane Rosman, Member-at-Large
Andrew Serke, Treasurer
Geoff Whitlock, Stewardship Liaison

Vestry Class of 2026

Chad Eckles, Fellowship Liaison
Morgan Miller, Pastoral Care Liaison
Sarah Schultz, Register
Mary Stewart, Adult Formation & Stewardship Liaison
Eric Waskowicz, Junior Warden

Parish Team Leads

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



Reading a printed copy of Grace Notes?
Use your smartphone to scan the QR Code
and view an online copy with clickable links.