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October 2023

GRACE NOTES

A Monthly Magazine Published by Grace Episcopal Church

3601 Russell Road | Alexandria, Virginia 22305



**October Theme:
Multiplying Our Blessings**

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A Message from Bill Malone, *Senior Warden*



Dear Friends in Christ—

I wrote to the parish recently that my heart remained full of gratitude for you. As the Body of Christ at Grace Church, we already are rising to meet the challenge put before us in our imperfect but wonderfully bighearted way.

I expect we will continue acting in a way consistent both with our humanity and with our signature generosity of spirit. I entreat you to keep open your hearts to God's joy and grace. This will enable us to rely on the wellspring of goodness that comes from this parish family and from our life in Christ. These things are sure.

I know some of you have been expecting a summary of all the events of the last few weeks related to Mother Anne's resignation and culminating in Bishop Stevenson's visit on Sunday, October 1. In due time I will have something ready for you, but it needs to be helpful, careful, and shared the right way. I'm working on it. I encourage anyone with questions to please call or email me whenever you would like (malone.bill@gmail.com, 703-981-7995).

For this article, I want to share something a bit different. It is a favorite scripture passage of mine, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

For it is the God who said, "Light will shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

There is a lot to unpack in that verse, and I commend it to you for contemplation. What I have been taking from this is a reminder of who God is and how he engages with us as individuals.

First, God is the creator and Lord of the cosmos. He is the mysterious and powerful artist behind what we see in the breathtaking images from the NASA James Webb space telescope, from the beauty that we see in nature here on earth, in human creativity, and in the wisdom of scripture.

Second, it is this same God who—in the person of Jesus—is active in our center, our hearts. My hope for us all is that we continually remind ourselves and one another of God's ability to heal, transform, energize, and sanctify us from the inside out. We have access to the source of all life through that light shining inside.

It is for this reason I have every confidence in this parish and its incredible people to keep doing all the good work God has called us to do. And it is in your faces, too, that I see the light of Christ shine. In your love for the church, in your steadfast support, in your selfless service, and in your ability to keep showing up.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Malone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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 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

I have always found comfort in the famous advice from Mr. Rogers about looking for the helpers. “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news,” Fred Rogers said to his television neighbors, “my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’”

In the last few weeks, it has been a great consolation for me to witness the outpouring of love, support, and prayers in our parish. I didn’t have to look hard to find the helpers. Parishioners writing or calling to tell us, “I don’t know what to say or what to do, but I’m here for you all.” Friends supporting one another with prayers and loving-kindness. Witnessing our vestry members’ great gift of self-giving love.

The events of the last few weeks in our parish have been painful and difficult. They have elicited a wide range of emotions in us: loss and grief, sadness for Mother Anne, stress adjusting to change, anxiety dealing with uncertainty, concern about the future, anger, and resentment. All of these feelings are normal and valid, and allowing ourselves to experience our feelings without judgment can be an important part of the healing process. Another important part of that journey is the gift of a community where we can experience belonging, loving-kindness, and wholeness.

“Looking for the helpers” is a contemplation on the goodness of our community. “Looking for the helpers” is a meditation on finding God in the midst of pain and chaos. Critics of this advice from Mr. Rogers think that it is merely optimistic counsel for children (Fred Rogers’ main audience). These critics say that “looking for the helpers” is a tactic that diverts a child’s distress toward safety. They propose that it is better to be a helper. They insinuate that the only solution is to learn to contemplate the painful and uncomfortable things that happen all around us.

I would add that “there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under the heavens” (Eccles 3:1):
— a time to be a helper and a time to look for the helpers;
— a time to meditate on our current predicament;
— a time to contemplate the goodness of God.

Insomuch as it is good to be a helper—and to heed Jesus’ call to be a Good Samaritan—“looking for helpers” is a search for consolation in the midst of desolation. It is a prayer of gratitude for God’s goodness in the midst of trying times. It is a call to notice what is good even when our heart aches. It is an invitation to pay attention to the peaceful beauty expressed by helping hands, marks of affection, and gestures of friendship.

Today, I give thanks for our helpers. Right now, I give thanks for God’s invitation to keep our eyes fixed on love. Right this minute, I’m giving thanks that “Our help is the name of the Lord.” (Psalm 124:8)





Buscar los Ayudantes

THE REV. SANTI RODRIGUEZ, ASSOCIATE RECTOR

Siempre me ha reconfortado el famoso consejo de Fred Rogers sobre buscar ayudantes. 'Mister Rogers' fue un carismático pastor, músico, titiritero, escritor y productor, que tuvo un programa para niños por más de 30 años: Mister Rogers' Neighborhood (1968). Mister Rogers, sus invitados y su elenco de títeres les hablaban directamente a los niños para que pudieran entender mejor el mundo que los rodeaba de una manera sencilla y amigable.

"Cuando era niño y veía cosas aterradoras en las noticias," dijo Mister Rogers a sus vecinos de la televisión, "mi madre me decía: 'Busca a los ayudantes'. Siempre encontrarás personas que te están ayudando". Quiere decir, mira a tu alrededor y localiza a los que ayuda - a las manos amigas. Date cuenta de las personas que están ayudando y actuando con bondad.

En las últimas semanas, ha sido un gran consuelo para mí ser testigo del apoyo, bondad y cariño de nuestros parroquianos. No tuve que buscar mucho para encontrar a los ayudantes y manos amigas. Los feligreses que nos escribieron o llamaron para decirnos: "No sé qué decir ni qué hacer, pero aquí estoy para lo que necesiten". Parroquianos apoyándose con oraciones y paciencia. La gran abnegación de nuestros miembros de la junta parroquial.

Los acontecimientos de las últimas semanas en nuestra parroquia han sido dolorosos y difíciles. Han provocado en nosotros una amplia gama de emociones: pérdida y dolor, tristeza por la Madre Anne, estrés para adaptarse al cambio, ansiedad ante la incertidumbre, preocupación por el futuro, ira y resentimiento.

Todos estos sentimientos son normales y válidos, y permitirnos experimentarlos sin juzgarlos puede ser una parte importante de nuestro proceso de curación. Otra parte importante de la sanación es compartir con una comunidad donde podemos experimentar pertenencia, amor y comprensión.

Todo tiene su momento, y cada cosa tiene su tiempo bajo el cielo (Ecl. 3:1):

- un tiempo para ser ayudantes y un tiempo para buscar ayudantes,
- un momento para meditar sobre nuestra situación actual y
- un momento para contemplar la bondad de Dios.

"Buscar a los ayudantes" es una contemplación de la bondad de nuestra comunidad. También es una meditación sobre cómo encontrar a Dios en medio del caos y el dolor. "Buscar los ayudantes" es una búsqueda de consuelo en medio de la desolación. Es una oración de gratitud por la bondad de Dios en medio de tiempos difíciles. Es un llamado a notar lo que es bueno incluso cuando nos duele el corazón. Es una invitación a prestar atención a la paz expresada en manos amigas, muestras de cariño y gestos de amistad.

Hoy doy gracias por nuestros ayudantes. En este momento doy gracias por la invitación de Dios a mantener la mirada fija en el amor. Doy gracias a Dios por cada uno de ustedes y por el amor infinito que Dios comparte con cada uno de nosotros y con nuestra comunidad de fe.





From Mother Emma

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

At Little Church each week, the prayer we offer after receiving communion is much shorter than those found in the **Book of Common Prayer**. In unison we loudly proclaim, "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you, God!" And during this short prayer, countless images flash through my mind of the many people, places, pets, and more for which I am grateful each week. This week, at the top of my list, is Grace.

I am grateful for the adults who volunteer their time with our youth on Sunday mornings and at Youth Nights. I am grateful for croquet tournaments. I am grateful for the parents who entrust their children to our care. I am grateful for the story sharing during Children's Chapel and the creativity during Formation Hour. I am grateful that I got to pet alpacas at my workplace. I am grateful for all the resources that support children's and youth formation. Indeed, I am grateful to be at Grace and honored to work with this community.



We are facing a challenging situation in our parish, and it will continue to be difficult for the months ahead. We are also facing an exciting opportunity to come together and support one another across generations.

Here are some suggestions for ways you can support the children and youth of Grace, especially during this period of uncertainty.

1. Be truthful, calm, and compassionate in your explanations. Our younger members can usually tell when they are not getting the whole story, so I would encourage parents, Sunday School teachers, and Youth Sponsors to keep their children updated on what is happening in the church, without making it the focus of our communal life.

2. Remind kids that they are valuable members of our community. All the time, grown-ups tell me about how much they care about the children and youth at our church. Are you telling them how much you value them? And this leads us to my final thought...



3. Talk to our awesome youth. This one is simple and yet incredibly meaningful. Ask the younger members of our parish about their lives. Find out what they find meaningful about church. Share with them your faith journey. One of the best ways to help youth thrive is by building meaningful relationships so that they have a broad collection of grown-ups to look out for them and mentor them. If you're interested in volunteering with our youth, please reach out to me.



Thank you, thank you, thank you, God, for the children, youth, and grown-ups at Grace Church. And thank you for always guiding us to closer relationship with one another and **with Christ.**



Grace Episcopal School



**PATTI CULBRETH,
HEAD OF SCHOOL**

This month's Grace Notes theme of "multiplying our blessings" is exactly the kind of math we love to do at Grace School! Our community is blessed to have a thriving school filled with dedicated faculty and staff as well as talented students. The future is bright and the blessings abound!

In October, we will join other Episcopal schools around the nation to celebrate Episcopal Schools Week with the theme, "Run the Race with Perseverance." Our students will take a wonderful field trip to the National Cathedral for a special service with area Episcopal schools.



October is also when we will have accomplished all the "firsts" (class, club, field trip, Back-to-School Night, safety drill, etc). Now we are settling into the rhythm of the school year and watching with great pride as our students learn and discover the world around them. There is nothing as tender as seeing a child dive into reading, explore through a science experiment, debate a new concept, or enjoy good sportsmanship on the playground. The days are rich at Grace, and the students make each day a wonderful experience.

The school year is humming along with great energy. Happy fall to all!



OPS & COMMS

Operations & Communications @ Grace



KEVIN HAMILTON,
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & COMMUNICATION



Here is the church...

... see all the people!



Have you ever seen the old-school hand gestures kids sometimes do symbolizing churches and people: “Here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors, and see all the people.” That gesture has been playing over and over in my mind the last couple of weeks. During this difficult season, I have seen “all the people” of Grace showing up in amazing ways. The care being shown to one another has been a testament to what I was told about this parish when I was approached about joining the staff—that Grace is a community of special people.

It is my prayer and hope that we will continue showing up, staying connected to the life of Grace as we support one another. I often tell the folks in my own church that sometimes we do not realize that our mere presence is an amazing gift that we get to offer one another. You may not know it, but just showing up and being there for one another in Jesus’ name can be uplifting and life-giving, especially during difficult seasons. The journey of life is best taken in community.

As we continue to support one another, I know that some of you have questions about how you can ensure that you are on Grace’s church-wide emails for notices and updates on the life of the parish. Ensuring that your email is up to date in Breeze will help other members who access Breeze to reach you, but that doesn’t automatically update your subscription to the Grace email list.

Due to laws and regulations regarding mass email communications, our church-wide email list requires that people “opt in” to be added. If you are not currently receiving regular emails, including the Friday morning Good News @ Grace, please email me at kevin.hamilton@gracealex.org and I will ensure that you are added. If you are already subscribed and have an updated email address, please provide me with the previous email that you would like it to replace. Also, there is a separate email group for families of children and youth. If you would like to be included in the weekly Wednesday email highlighting children and youth news at Grace, please let me know that as well.

I will respond to your email once your email address is added to the list(s). Due to the volume of emails received, it may be a couple of days before you are added and receive a confirmation email. If you do not receive confirmation within a couple of days, please feel free to give me a call at the church to ensure your email was received.



Campus Matters



ROBBY SCHRUM,
JUNIOR WARDEN

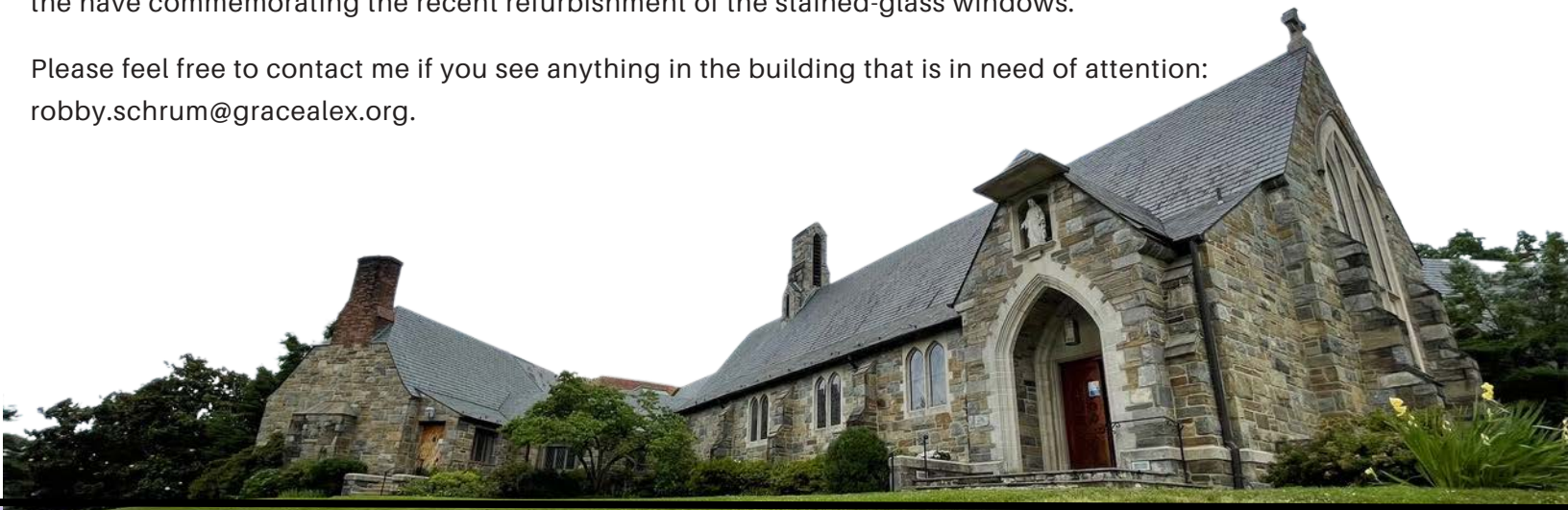
A few notes on Grace’s building and grounds, as we enter the final quarter of the year.

The water mitigation project outside Merrow Hall is just about complete. We’ll soon install some window wells and make plans for some new plants.

The rehab work on the elevator is complete. I hope you’ve been able to enjoy the new walls and ceiling!

Other projects ahead include masonry work in the hallway between the sacristy and the library, work on the railing that runs up the steps from the tower’s glass doors to the library door, and the installation of plaques to the stone in the nave commemorating the recent refurbishment of the stained-glass windows.

Please feel free to contact me if you see anything in the building that is in need of attention:
robby.schrum@gracealex.org.



Get Social with Grace!

Instagram



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facebook.com/
GraceEpiscopalChurchAlexandriaVa

Facebook Group



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

YouTube



Search for Grace Episcopal Church
Alexandria Virginia on YouTube.

Twitter



@graceepisalexva

Meet Our New Seminarians

Photo Credit: VTS Facebook Page



Reverend Deacon Ignacio (Iñaki) Solano Gómez

Deacon, Diocese of Southeastern Mexico

Virginia Theological Seminary, Class of 2025



My name is Ignacio Solano Gómez. I was born in San José, Costa Rica, and I grew up in a city called Coronado (which, forty years ago, was a small town). If that child, who ran in fields among the cows like Maria von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, had been asked if he could imagine that he would be studying in one of the best seminaries of the Anglican Communion and that he would be serving in a community like Grace Church a few miles from the capital of the United States, he definitely wouldn't have known how to respond. God takes the steps of our lives with tenderness and passion, with gradual changes and great leaps, and forms us with his plan of love and grace.

I was involved in church activities from a very young age, and these activities led me to move to Honduras when I was twenty-two. I left my native Costa Rica, returning only to visit my family—my parents, my brother, my sister and her four children, and my beloved nephews and nieces.

I lived in Honduras while studying psychology and developing pastoral projects for my parish and university. There I was a catechist—a teacher of church history classes for lay people—and responsible for music, without knowing how to read music. I also started a theater company dedicated to evangelization. These were years of intense study and adaptation to a new culture, years in which I cultivated great friendships that I still maintain. These were also years when the illusion of nationalism began to break within me; I began to stop believing that Costa Rica was the best country in the world and I discovered how each country is special, unique, and beautiful—like my native Costa Rica. I also discovered how a new country can adopt you as a child, how love and friendship dissolve borders and create a different reality.

After five years in Honduras, I moved to Mexico, where I lived for twelve years and where my soul came to identify so much with the culture of that great country that it changed my identity. I came to feel very much like a Mexican Central American. Mexico is a land that I carry in my soul as my second homeland, the land where I received the call from God again to serve him in his church. There I worked in human development, first as a professor of psychometrics for the faculties of psychology, psychopedagogy, and even with those of medicine, as a guest professor at the Popular Autonomous University of the State of Puebla. I also worked in a school, providing psychological care and teaching human development, ethics, and career guidance classes to students from preschool to high school.

As one who had always felt the call to ministry in the church, I continued to pray to God to show me his will, which happened in 2020 when I decided to say “yes” to the Lord. After many comings and goings, conversations, requests for help, a lot of support, and many prayers, I was accepted into the Master in Divinity program at Virginia Theological Seminary, as a seminarian of Southeastern Mexico as well as a seminarian of The Church of the Transfiguration, Manhattan. Where do Oaxaca and Manhattan meet?

How is it possible for a Costa Rican to belong to a diocese in Mexico while his sending parish is in New York? I think the only thing that can explain this is the Holy Spirit, who blows where she wants and how she wants. In my case, my rector and my sending parish were providential angels that supported my vocation, along with my adoptive community Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Oaxaca and their Priest in Charge too. I know that I am eternally grateful to Rev. John David van Dooren and to Rev. Bruce Shipman, as well as to their communities, my family.

I am currently a deacon of the Diocese of Southeast Mexico, ordained on July 16 by my dear Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Julio César Martín, at Holy Trinity Church. But at the same time, I am only a second-year seminarian who is learning new things day by day and who is trying to balance the two missions that God has given me: studies and charity.

As a neo-deacon, my first mission was to serve my beloved community of expats with whom I spent two months this summer in Oaxaca. I then moved to my sending parish in Manhattan, where we began a monthly service in Spanish, which is growing and provides an opportunity for Latino people in Midtown to hear the message of grace and salvation, of forgiveness and blessing, of liberation and dignity that the Gospel brings us "en español."

I feel so glad to walk with you on this part of the path, and I ask God that his love may always be among us, that we can walk together as children of the same God and Father of all, who has brought us together into one family—human beings of every language, race, people, and nation. Pura Vida!



Noah Aukerman

Diocese of Northern Indiana

Virginia Theological Seminary, Class of 2025

Hello, Grace Episcopal Church.

My name is Noah Aukerman (they/them), and I'm excited to participate in the life and worship of Grace as a seminarian. This fall marks the beginning of my second year in Alexandria, studying at Virginia Theological Seminary. I was born in Indiana and raised in Durrës, Albania, by parents engaged in full-time ministry.

While finishing my bachelor's in worship arts at Indiana Wesleyan University, I was confirmed in the Diocese of Northern Indiana at Gethsemane Episcopal Church, now my sending parish.

After graduating, I spent a year serving with AmeriCorps in western Montana before beginning seminary.

When I'm not studying or engaged in other seminarian-esque activities, I enjoy creating music and art, long walks with trees and grass as my primary company, and a good, old-fashioned, face-to-face conversation.

Opinion: Youth Perspective

A Review of Shrine Mont

Annie Eason



Friday Night:

The drive to Shrine Mont was nice, in spite of the heavy rain, and it wasn't as far as I thought. We got there pretty late, but I finished the day doing some homework for my journalism class so, overall, it ended up being very productive. I decided to not go to the Friday night party since I'm not that much of a party person. The spiders were kind of freaky, but I ignored them after a while since it was clear they didn't intend to harm anyone.

Saturday:

I went to Starbucks to get a pumpkin spice latte with my dad and the drive there—while long—was scenic and definitely worth it. The breakfast at Shrine Mont was also pretty good. The Shrine Mont dining hall gave off school-lunch vibes, but more like I was going to a private boarding school with actually edible food. I also went on a hike to the stations of the cross. Unfortunately, the path was blocked by a fallen tree surrounded by poison ivy and I didn't feel like crossing that. We made it just past the tenth station. We then went to the outside service, which I thought was nice since it was outdoors. Lunch and dinner were good, and then my friends and I played around for a bit until the rehearsal for the Follies. I also made some crafts. Since I got rejected for my school's play, I thought the Follies would be a great opportunity to do some acting, so I signed up along with some other people. Overall, it was really fun, even though the play wasn't that serious—it was only an hour rehearsal run-through. My friends and I played around a bit more and played some card games. Then I did some studying for my upcoming biology test and went to sleep.

Sunday:

I woke up and went to breakfast. I played with my friends for a bit until we decided it was time to leave Shrine Mont along with most of the other parishioners.

Overall, I thought the Shrine Mont weekend was very enjoyable. It offered a time to make new connections, explore the property, and have fun in the process. I will say that the shower was kind of creepy and could use an upgrade—a new shower head and new flooring would have been nice! I do understand, though, that Shrine Mont and the people who manage it probably have a long list of improvements to pay for. The absence of air conditioning was thankfully accommodated by the presence of fans. I believe that a more specific list of things to bring would've been nice; for example, we brought towels for no reason as our room was already supplied with some. A room-specific bring-list for the different types of rooms (rooms that are connected from the outside only, rooms without a bathroom, the bigger ones, etc.) would've been useful as well. I hope that they will be able to remove the log from the trail soon, so that hikers can see the rest of the trail without getting poison ivy!

Despite these few criticisms, I still believe that the Shrine Mont weekend was a beneficial and fun experience. Honestly, this was one of the most fun weekends I've ever had. I also greatly enjoyed seeing the unique architecture in the main building, the gorgeous scenery, and being able to make new friends here. I definitely recommend going!

P.S. I felt I did pretty well on my bio test.



Photo taken by Annie Eason, 9/10/2023

Diocesan News



by Doug Prince

Diocesan Digest: 229th Virginia Annual Convention

The 229th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia will be held November 2 - 4, 2023, at the Fredericksburg Convention Center in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Day One will include presentations on Communications, Discernment, Best Practices, and Reparations. A gathering of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) representatives will also share information, hear from our Bishops, and express collective hopes and dreams for the future of ministry and life in the Diocese of Virginia. The day will conclude with a Choral Evensong.

Day Two will open with Bishop Stevenson's Pastoral Address. Then Dr. Catherine Meeks, founding executive director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, will present information on Racial Justice and Healing. Following that will be a presentation on Discipleship. The afternoon will feature a panel discussion led by Bishops and other presentation leaders. The day will conclude with a celebration of Holy Eucharist.

Standard Committee Reports on Church Status, Resolutions, Treasury, and our Constitution and Canons will conclude the third day of the convention.

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

Sunday Morning Adult Forum Schedule

Adult Forum will resume on October 8 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 will be available just outside the St. Mark room.

October 8: Take the Recycling Challenge with Liz Rugaber

October 15: How I Came to Grace, presented by Lisa Bellantoni, Grant Miller, Mary Montequin, Kristin Woodiwiss and Katie Ziegler

October 22: Meaning of Money, presented by Mary Hix

October 29: Grief Is a Way of Loving, presented by Father Santi Rodriguez

Life @

Shrine Mont



Holy Hike



Grace

Llamapalooza



Carpenter's Shelter Dinners and Need for New Coordinator

Grace Church has a long history with Carpenter's Shelter. As part of our relationship, we prepare and serve dinner at the shelter every third Tuesday of the month. Responsibility for doing so rotates among Grace School, the Lay Eucharistic Ministers, and the Outreach Committee. We've been serving these dinners for over thirty years, almost since the official beginning of the shelter in 1988.

For this important ministry to continue, the Outreach Committee needs a new coordinator of the Carpenter's Shelter dinner service it provides every three months. The coordinator's duties include sending reminders about the dinner as well as the actual preparation and serving of the dinner. The current coordinator is moving on (to North Carolina).

If anyone is interested in being the new coordinator, please contact Mary Hix (maryhix@gmail.com) or Cindy Diehl (cindy.diehl@gracealex.org).



Grace Parishioners Joyfully Preparing for September 19 Dinner at Carpenter's Shelter

For more information about the history of Carpenter's Shelter, the many services it provides, and the history of Grace Church's involvement with the organization, see the May 2023 issue of Grace Notes at <https://www.gracealex.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/May-2023-Grace-Notes.pdf> or view the organization's website at <https://carpentersshelter.org/>.



Barbara Morris

An Occasional WORD

Adventure in a French Toilet

A few years ago my husband, Ward, and I ended our walk atop the massive stone fortification walls of St. Malo, France. Now we needed a rest room.

Near a worn stone staircase, we spotted a hand-lettered sign, W.C. (water closet). Beneath it was a crude, rickety door of weathered wood. Could this be the toilet? It looked like it had been cut into the walls' stone foundation. We pushed and pulled, but the door didn't budge. Then, we noticed a rusting metal box with a coin slot and a sign asking for a thirty-centimes entry fee.

We checked all pockets—and came up with exactly thirty centimes! We would have to cheat and, guiltily, go in together. We clunked the coins into the slot, then slowly pushed the creaky door inward. As my eyes adjusted to the dimness, I saw that the toilet space had been dug out of the rock! It was a rock cave with two things in it—a lid-less toilet in the middle of the cramped space and a dangling fifteen-watt light bulb. I gasped, then gasped again when I saw that the door was being pushed open by a large, work-worn hand. A Frenchman was elbowing his way into the toilet!

"Non, non, Monsieur!" I cried in my rusty high school French, fluttering my hands at him. Ward also tried to evict him, but the man, smiling and half bowing, shoved his way in and closed the door. The three of us stood there--dark, stark-still figures in the dim light. Then the Frenchman, still smiling, turned to face the wall. Clearly, he meant to stay, but he would give us privacy. We had no choice.

I used the facility first while Ward stood, hands on hips to create a larger profile. I did the same for him, though it was entirely unnecessary, for the Frenchman stood rigid and at attention, facing the wall three inches from his nose. His stillness and formal posture seemed out of place in a toilet. Yet, it also seemed appropriate and almost Victorian.

When we were finished, I tapped the man gently on the shoulder. "Okay," I mumbled. He turned, still smiling, and raised his hand. He was offering me something! A ten-centime coin! I caught my breath. He was offering to pay his third of the entrance fee!

"Non, non! Monsieur." My hands fluttered "no." Ward, too, repeated "No, thank you." But the man insisted. Suddenly I choked out the first thing that came to mind. "It's a gift...a present."

Instantly the ridiculousness of my comment struck me--the gift of a free toilet visit! I stifled a giggle. Then a giggle escaped me, for, in that cramped dim space, all three of us were instinctively bowing and bobbing to one another.

The Frenchman pocketed his coin and stood aside with a gracious gesture, as if we were leaving a garden party in his home. It called for a formal response. "Au revoir," I purred, dramatically rolling my "r's" deep in my throat.

Finally, Ward opened the door--and we were swept aside by two more Frenchmen who barged in--Bonjour! Bonjour!--to enjoy a free toilet visit on our thirty centimes!

Why Grace?

By Sarah Schultz



It almost wasn't Grace, so it is fun to write a response to this twenty years later. I grew up in New Jersey and New York as the oldest of four kids, made my way to UVA, and began working in DC in 1996. While I would like nothing more than to claim "cradle Episcopalian" status, I was actually baptized at a Lutheran church when I was three and my brother, Niel, was a newborn. Apparently, that didn't take, though, because our family migrated to the Presbyterian church, then Dutch Reformed, and then finally found their niche as Episcopalians.

I enjoyed attending the 5:00 pm student services at St Paul's in Charlottesville, and later many different churches downtown. When I moved out to Fairfax, Virginia, I began to use the Yellow Pages (it's like a paper version of the internet; stick with me) to systematically try out Episcopal churches. What they all had in common was their welcoming congregations and beautiful liturgy; the differences were more fun to observe. A smaller church brought me freshly baked bread for several weeks, trying to entice me back. Another left me questioning reality when they performed a full immersion baptism! Much like the fairy tale, some were too modern, some were too low, none was just right.

I church-shopped for a few years, while simultaneously (possibly with less discernment) seeking a spouse. I landed both in Alexandria! I met Robert, who was living in Del Ray, and we married in 2005 (more on that shortly). When we were dating, I got to know his close friend and former housemate, Greg Ruff, and Greg's then-fiancée, Amanda Finkle. Greg IS a cradle Episcopalian (lucky duck) and life-long Grace parishioner.

And while I wouldn't think of Greg as an evangelist, I do credit him with a certain amount of southern hospitality, and a love for Grace: "Have you tried Grace Church, Sarah?" And the rest, as they say, is history!

A few fun stories along the way:

When Robert and I decided to marry, Mother Anne Turner was the Assistant Rector at Grace. Robert, not particularly church-y, had a real affinity for Anne, which made our pre-marital counseling a lot more fun. We wanted to have our reception on Robert's sister's property out in Markham, Virginia. When I drove by The Episcopal Church of Leeds Parish, I was in love—but, unfortunately, was met with a "firm policy" that you had to be a member to marry there. With disappointment, we conveyed this to Anne, who replied with a smirk, "I don't think that will be a problem. Did you speak with the rector?" The rector, it turned out, was Mother Anne's actual mother! Arrangements were made, and a wedding we had. (Anne delivered her first child mere days after our wedding. Now that is dedication!)

Robert was baptized shortly before we were married, and later we baptized our two children at Grace. Willem was an unruly toddler by the time he was baptized, as we had been waiting for my mother's ordination into the transitional diaconate. It was a joy to have her baptize (wrangle) Willem with Father Malm. We also baptized our two nephews at that service, Key and Riley. At the Thanksgiving service in 2009, my now fully ordained mother baptized Celia at Grace. Sidebar: I love the Thanksgiving Day service at Grace, and we always go when we are in town—I hope you do, too!

Over the years I have enjoyed so many aspects of Grace — newcomers' receptions, especially being so welcomed by Dorothy Daniel; the new mothers group that used to meet at Grace, receiving communion from LEMs after the kids were born, and a beautiful flower arrangement in a lamb vase that Linda Waskowicz brought me; Foyer Dinners that Sharon Hickock convinced us to try, which allowed me to see what real hostessing looked like at Anne Caputo's home; joining the Altar Guild, and being trained by Ruth Corlett and Ashby Rushing, and so, so many wonderful women (and a few men!); leading the chaos of the Christmas pageant with Lisa Bellantoni; becoming a J2A sponsor for an amazing group of (cradle Episcopalian!) kids in partnership with Greg Ruff, Ann Berry, and the Faïreses.

So many Shrine Monts, punctuated by the welcoming libations from Howell Medley and Rich Kelly. Setting daily services in solitude in the beautiful nave, and stringing greens amidst the pandemonium of Advent. Seeing my son, who you all patiently pretended was not a terror in the pews, become an acolyte under the care of Molly Sim and Rick Eudy, and my daughter an Altar Guild member! Driving by in haste between errands and carpools and work and feeling a peace just looking at the beautiful façade. Finally, managing to set aside Thursdays at noon to attend the Daily service. The list goes on (though some of the people do not, and they are missed), and I hope will for many more years. Why Grace? Because as much as I found Grace, it has found me--time and time again, in every stage of my life. And for that, I give thanks!





EVAN ROBINSON,
TREASURER

From the Treasurer

FALL CONTRIBUTIONS & A NEW BROKERAGE ACCOUNT

Pledge contributions to Grace are important throughout the year but are particularly critical during the fall, when much of our annual revenue comes in. Many thanks to the great majority of parishioners who have kept up their pledges throughout the year. If you haven't kept up or have been distracted, please work to make up the difference. Pledges during the final quarter directly impact the budget process and our financial projections for next year. Also, many of those contributions are made via transfers of stocks or required minimum distributions (RMD) from IRAs; **Grace has a new brokerage account for such transfers.** Several years ago, Charles Schwab acquired TD Ameritrade (TDA) and in early September the Grace brokerage account transitioned from TDA to Schwab. So, to review the process:

Stock and Equity Donations

When you sell stocks, mutual funds, or other equities, the difference between the purchase price (or value when inherited) and the amount you realized from the sale is a capital gain (or loss) and is subject to capital gains taxes. These tax rates depend on whether the gain was long- or short-term and on your taxable income level when the security was sold. Federal capital gains tax rates usually average about fifteen percent for those with median incomes.



However, if you tell your broker to donate the equities directly to Grace Church, you won't have to pay any capital gains tax and can deduct the full amount as a charitable donation. First, decide how much you'd like to contribute and when. Then ask your broker to structure the transfer to reach the desired amount and benefit your portfolio, usually by choosing equities that have a low cost basis. **Stocks should be transferred to Grace Episcopal Church, Account 7202-1988 at Schwab, DTC Number 0164.** To ensure proper credit, please advise the Treasurer, Bookkeeper, or Director of Operations that you'll be contributing stocks; stocks arriving in Grace's account often have no indication of their origin or contributor.

By policy, Grace sells all stock donations as soon as possible after receipt and then transfers the cash proceeds from the Schwab account to the Grace bank account. When the sale has been completed, the Treasurer or Bookkeeper will confirm the sale and cash transfer to the contributor by email.



Required Minimum Distribution as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (RMD as QCD)

Many parishioners have Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA), investments in a 401(k), or similar retirement plans. If you have such accounts, tax laws require you to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from such accounts by the end of the year in which you celebrate your seventy-third birthday.

The normal distribution is about four percent of the total value of the IRA. When you originally contributed to these IRAs the money wasn't taxed, so you'll now have to pay the tax after it's transferred from your IRA to your bank or other account. However, all or part of this RMD can be paid directly to a charitable organization (such as Grace Church) as a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" (QCD) and won't be subject to tax.

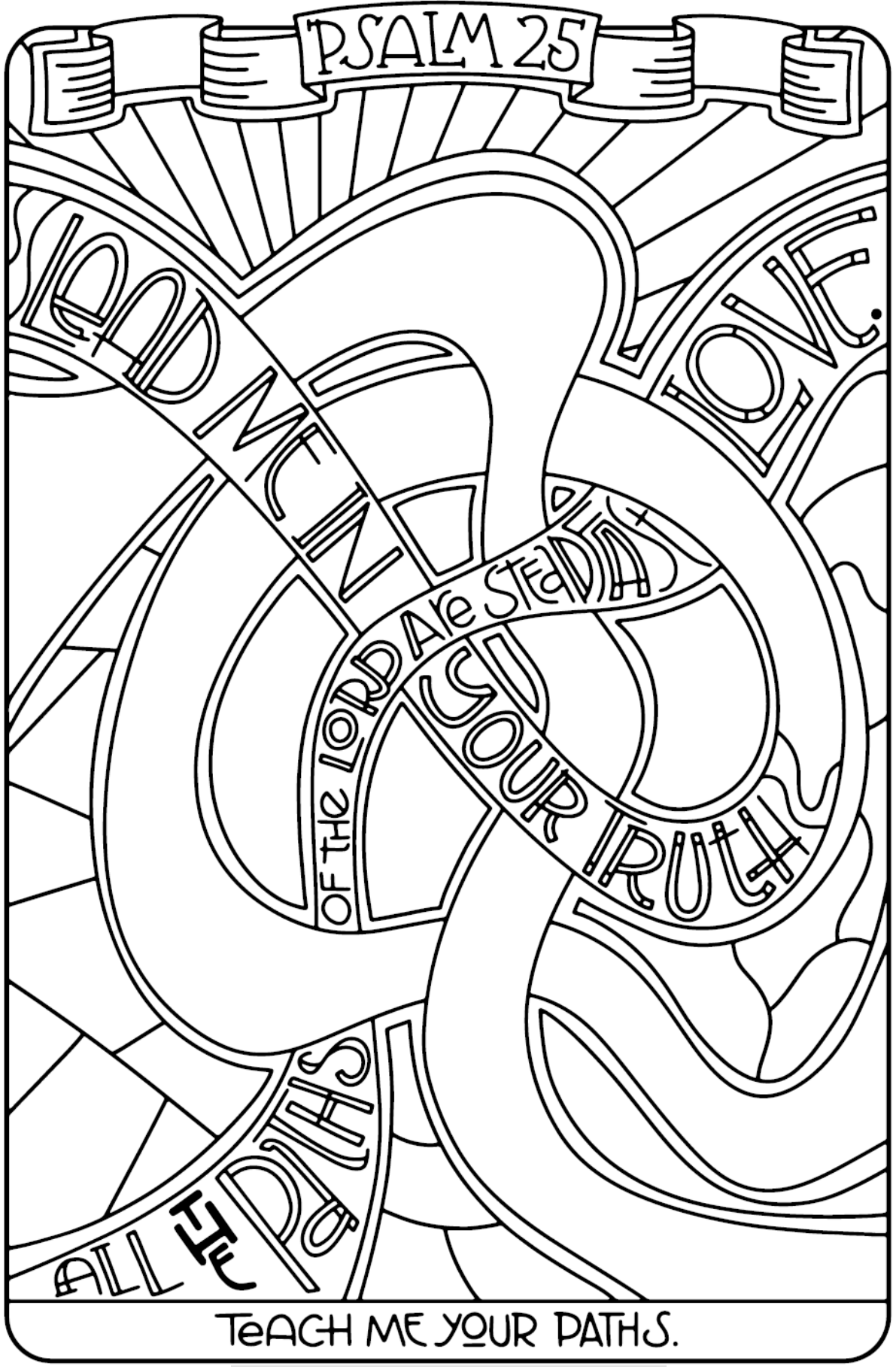
RMDs don't qualify as an itemized charitable deduction for your taxes, but they can otherwise lower your tax bill and Medicare premiums. There's more information on the IRS Website <https://www.irs.gov> (look for "RMD" and Pub 590B). We recommend you talk to your financial advisor or accountant if you'd like to consider this option.

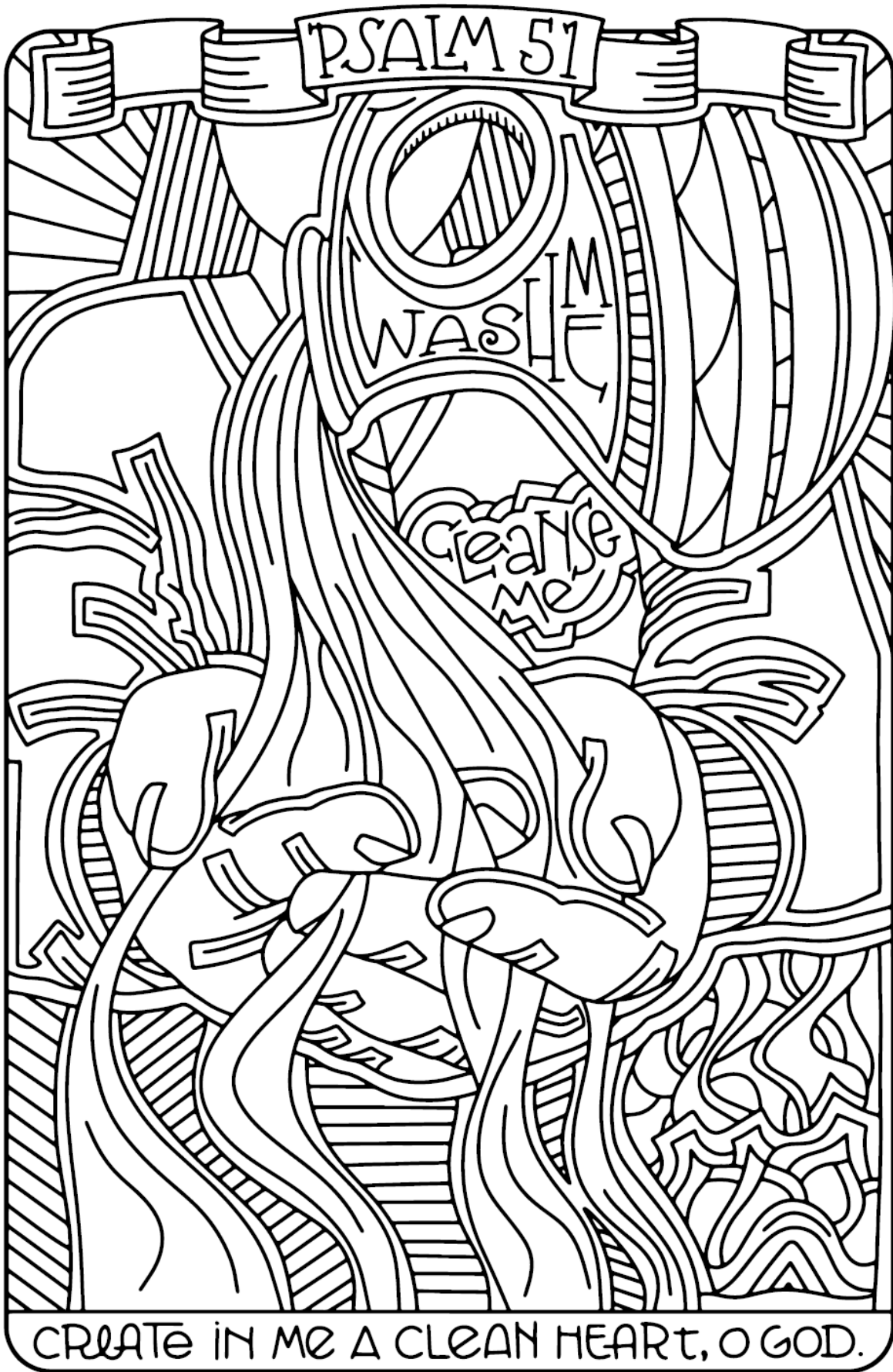
Thanks for reading through this article. Next month we'll provide updated information on automatic bank transfers, online, and traditional "Sunday Plate" donation by cash or check.

Thank you for your continuing support of Grace Episcopal Church.

Photo Credit: Canva.com









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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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