



## Celebrating 117 Years of God's Grace!

GRACE NOTES – January 2019

The News from GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

### *The Vicar's Vision*

#### **A Community of strangers**

At hearing that phrase you might first think it is an oxymoron. Community implies knowing and belonging and strangers implies the opposite.

When I was just 21 years old (that has been a while ago!) my Church Minister invited me to a weekend spiritual retreat, a Cursillo. I remember one of the opening exercises was to share with the group a story about someone who had been Christ for us in our lives. I remember hearing a story from one older woman about a neighbor who had stayed with her through her husband's long illness when many others had left. Another story from a grown man about his father deserting the family when he was only 5 and the dad of his best friend stepping in to be that father figure for him for many years.

One story after another were stories of compassion and care that had been received by strangers at the time. The dining hall of our conference center turned into a tent meeting of sorts that first evening of the weekend as we all gathered around our warm and loving stories of Jesus our friend. Until one young woman stood and said, "In thinking about someone who has been Christ to me I asked myself, "Who has been willing to tell me the truth so clearly that I wanted to get rid of them?"

She dampened the mood in the room with her comment but she reminded us all of something we would just as soon forget. Jesus is not only our comfort. Christ is also the one who pushes us and challenges us telling us the truths we don't want to hear.

In this complex and ever changing world where life seems to get more and more complicated, buildings go up faster and faster, ethnic groups and social classes are no longer divided by neighborhoods and railroad tracks, and individual desire often trumps care for the community many of us look to our church for a sense of familiar "like-minded people." I say that with quotations because we are as different as we can be!

I am sure that in this small community of faith, I now call home, we have people aligned on every political spectrum, we have your basic conservative and the most outrageous liberal. We have those with wealth and we have the working class. We have youth and young at heart. We have those in recovery and those that still struggle.

If the truth really be told we all have our list of people we would choose to sit with or not sit with. Maybe you can say them by name or maybe it is just a certain kind of people.

It is this whole touchy matter of community (being the body of Christ) that Jesus addresses to the people of his hometown in the fourth

chapter of Luke's Gospel. Jesus said to them what I hope you hear today from my words.

God's sense of community is so much bigger than ours. It includes the poor, it includes captives and prisoners, it includes those who are oppressed and to those who are blind. It includes sinners and tax collectors and democrats and republicans and people who agree with me and people who do not.

By verse 28 of the very same chapter in Luke the Nazarene community that raised him has become so outraged at Jesus they have led him outside the city to a cliff where they wish to push him over.

The minute he denied them what they wanted to hear he became, not favored son but unwelcome stranger who offended them so terribly they wanted to kill him.

The Community of Strangers is the title of a book by Quaker Theologian Parker Palmer. Palmer is looking to the church to renew the idea of public life in this country. "Public" to Parker Palmer grasps a vision of interdependence on one another. He uses as examples public parks and public libraries and public schools. In all of these places he says, strangers come together and agree to share common resources. We do not have to see eye to eye on everything. We do not even have to like each other but in order for public life to work, Palmer contends, we do have to respect each others dignity as human beings. And we must act with honor among strangers as well as friends.

Palmer believes public life has broken down largely because we have begun to regard strangers as enemies. God's amazing variety of humankind has become a threat, not a blessing.

The church is sometimes not very different but we do know better. We know about Jesus himself, who preferred the company of lost souls to the company of the religious. Jesus dares us to believe that it is God who makes us community and not we ourselves and that our

differences are God's best way for opening us up to the truth that is greater than all of us.

I heard a story about an elderly man who had adopted the habit of blessing everyone he met. He used a beautiful blessing from the Book of Numbers that says:

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

He offered this blessing regularly to his fellow residents at the nursing home, the cashier at the grocery store, and especially to children he would pass on the street.

It might be just the right practice to take on in the New Year. Practice blessing people who annoy you. Practice blessing people who have a different view than you. Practice blessing family and friends and those you deeply love. If people find out what you are doing some will probably think you are silly or losing your mind but what they will be encountering in you is the power of God's love.

The peace of God be with you,

Anne West



## Vestry Update

The Vestry has completed the Grace Church budget for 2019, and we are looking forward to sharing it with you. In general, the budget reflects good news, showing that we are a vibrant, thriving congregation. We are grateful to all of you for your pledges and continuing support. We are also grateful to Anne, our Vicar, for her guidance in working through the budget process.

The budget also reflects some important new commitments that will affect our planning not only for 2019, but also for years to come. We will have more to say about this at the annual meeting, but we believe these commitments show our strength as a congregation and our confidence in our future.

In other news, the Vestry has adopted a policy for use of our church facilities by other community groups. You may contact Linda in the church office for a copy of the policy. The Vestry tried hard to balance our desire to make Grace Church a welcoming and active part of the community with our recognition that the primary purpose of our buildings is to serve as a place of worship. We think we were successful, but please feel free to reach out to any of us with any questions or concerns.

We all wish you and your loved ones the best for 2019.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Schmidt

  
 **ECW NEWS AND NOTES**  
**January**

As we look in our rearview mirror, December was a wonderful time of fellowship, fun and giving to others! Thank you to Julie Winslow for hosting our Christmas Party. We had twenty people attend with whom we shared good food and fellowship. We also gave gifts to the Jackson-Feild Home which were delivered the next day. What a wonderful way to wrap-up our year!

Please take a look at the bulletin board where there are quite a few thank-you notes from organizations that we supported this past year. Looking ahead, we hope to enjoy another great year of being **Episcopal Church Women!** Keep a look out for when our next meeting will take place. If you have thoughts or ideas that you would like to see implemented, let me know. We are always open to new ideas and new faces!

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeannie Palin



### **Neighborhood Brunch**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Saturday Neighborhood Brunch celebrated birthdays and the upcoming new year. We had several neighbors join us for the



first time as well as many regulars. It was especially nice to see that people enjoyed the conversation and camaraderie long after they finished their meal.



### **Thank you with a grateful heart**

At midnight on Christmas Eve as I was basking in the glow of an evening full of love and joy as we welcomed the Christ Child I opened all the gifts that I was given in the wonderful tradition of a Vicar's Pounding. Many of you let me know who you were and I will say a personal thanks to you but many of you simply gave a gift. Each one was opened and appreciated.

Thank you for the warm welcome. My pantry and my heart are full.

May this New Year bring new and meaningful ways for us to be the Episcopal Church right here in Greene County.

Anne



As the end of the year is approaching, if you need to know where you stand in fulfilling your 2018 pledge or if you need a donation report for your tax records, please contact Treasurer **Linda Robbins.**



**† Birthdays, Baptisms, &  
Anniversaries †  
January 2019**

*Let us give thanks and praise to God for these special days in the life of our parish family members and friends.*

**Birthdays**

09 Eleanor Cary

11 Ross Erikson  
Lucie Mae Pattison

13 Matthew Fickes  
Hannah Rees

20 Herb Fickes

26 Kathryn Thomas



**Anniversaries**

05 Roy & Ann Dye

15 Brian & Suzanne Pattison



**Baptisms**



## Lay Participation Schedule for January 2019

	<b>1/6 The Feast of The Epiphany</b>	<b>1/13 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after The Epiphany</b>	<b>1/20 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after The Epiphany</b>	<b>1/27 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after The Epiphany</b>
<u>Lesson</u>	Isaiah 60:1-6	Isaiah 43:1-7	Isaiah 62:1-5	Nehemiah 8:1-3,5,6,8-10
<u>Psalm</u>	72: 1-7, 10-14	29	36: 5-10	19
<u>Gospel</u>	Matthew 2:1-12	Luke 3:15-17, 21, 22	John 2:1-11	Luke 4:14-21
<b>Ministry</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>
<u>LEM</u>	Minna Doyle	Mary Hogge	Cathy Lagana	George Long
<u>Lector</u>	Pat Peck	Scott Mingledorff	Linda Robbins	Jeannie Palin
<u>Intercessor</u>	Jeannie Palin	Jenny Morris	Betty Moreland	Pat Peck
<u>Usher</u>	Lou Hatter	Ann Mingledorff	Bill Schmidt	Angelo Lagana
<u>Jr. Usher</u>	Lucie Pattison	Lucie Pattison	Lucie Pattison	Lucie Pattison
<u>Coffee Hour</u>	Palin	McDaniel	ANNUAL MTG	Mingledorff
<u>Vestry Person</u>	* Linda Robbins	* Linda Robbins	* Linda Robbins	* Linda Robbins
<u>Altar Guild</u>	Jean Byerly Rev. Anne West	Jean Byerly Rev. Anne West	Jean Byerly Rev. Anne West	Jean Byerly Rev. Anne West

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**Coffee hour in the Parish Hall follows the service**

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**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**