



Grace Notes

Brief notes for the members, families and friends of Grace Episcopal Church



The Journey to Becoming Amahl



Our Gracie has loved performing ever since she was a little girl and thanks to Mr. C and the Grace Junior Choir, a wonderful outlet has been available to her over the past 5 years. The Grace Junior Choir gave her the first opportunity to use her voice, develop her knowledge of music, and have an opportunity to sing in front of an audience at a young age. This year in Grace Episcopal's Performance of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Gracie will be playing Amahl in the Sunday performance and she couldn't be more excited and thankful for the opportunity!

Gracie was a part of the chorus last year and loved the entire experience of The Amahl Show. When the opportunity to try out for the role of Amahl was presented, Gracie's first response was "YES! I want to try out!". As a mom, with a natural protective streak, I wanted to make sure that Gracie was prepared for not getting the role. I gave her a brief lecture on being aware that there were loads of talented kids at Grace Episcopal and if she was going to do this, she needed to be okay with not getting the part of Amahl. Her response was one I didn't expect - "It's okay Mom...if I don't get a call back or the role, this will be a great learning experience." To say the least, I was a bit shocked but proud that Gracie was able to look at it this way. I put my hesitancy on the back burner and we moved forward with the 1st tryout and the callback, not knowing when or how we would hear who got the role.

We were travelling back from a camping trip in Penn-

sylvania on Memorial Day when we got the call from Danny that Gracie had gotten the role (along with Katie Curtin who will perform in Saturday's performance). Mark played up the call while Gracie was sitting on the edge of her seat and finally told her "Libby got the part." We all chuckled a little bit at that but seeing the joy on Gracie's face, it warmed my heart. She was pleasantly surprised and so happy and thankful, it was a great moment for her.

Since her first rehearsal with Mr. C back in June, she has, practiced for 45 minutes daily and each week has two 1 1/2 hour rehearsals at Grace Church. She has committed herself completely to the role and while the time involved has been more than she's had to do in the past with other activities, her lack of complaint is an indication to me of how much she enjoys playing Amahl.

Gracie is very much looking forward to her performance on December 16th at Grace Church. She's been spreading the word of the performance to friends, family, teachers, doctors, her bus driver and the postman over the past 6 months. While the idea of singing and acting on stage in front of a group of people is foreign to both me and Mark, Grace craves being on stage and finds a sense of calm in front of an audience. Who knew?

Gracie would like to thank the entire Grace Episcopal community for it's love and support of the music ministry and is extremely grateful for the opportunity to perform the role of Amahl next month.

Mark & Sarah Albus

December 2012

Inside this issue:

Christmas Bazaar	2
Family Retreat	
Canvass Update	
Advent Traditions for Families	3
Amahl and the Night Visitors	4
Winter Garden Pennyworth	5
Grace Episcopal Day School	6
Advent Outreach Opportunities	7
Fiscal Officer Report	8
Daughters of the King	9
One More Note	

Special points of interest:

- Advent & Families
- Christmas Bazaar
- Amahl & the Night Visitors
- One More Note

A monthly publication from the Grace Church Communications Committee

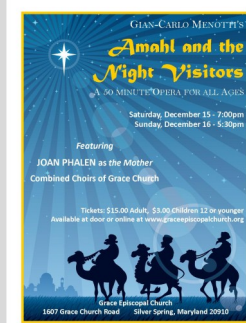
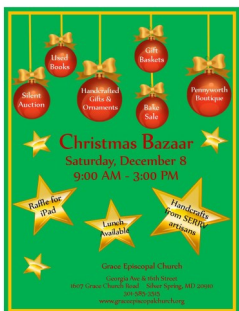
UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, December 8 - Christmas Bazaar

(more information on pg. 2)

Saturday, December 15 & Sunday, December 16
Amahl and the Night Visitors

(more information on pg. 4)



GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Grace Notes

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Matt Hardwick, John Mahler,
Amy Miller, Virgil Whitehurst,
Raquel Wilson**

Grace Notes

**The Rev. Andrew Walter
Linda Caleb**

Christmas Bazaar - Saturday, December 8 - 9:00am - 3:00pm



This annual event is one of the many things that makes Grace such a special place. It is a chance to gather together and enjoy the food, fun and fellowship that binds us as a joyful and faithful community.

You will find seasonal gift items from Pennyworth, homemade baked goods, a silent auction, used book sale and an extensive assortment of handmade crafts all donated by our generous parishioners. A hot lunch, prepared and served by the Grace Men's Group, will also be available.



This year's raffle has two items; an IPAD mini and a Kindle Fire. Tickets are still priced at one ticket for \$1.00 or six tickets for \$5.00. The drawing will take place at 3:00 on December 8. You do not need to be present to win.



The Christmas Bazaar is a major fundraiser for the church, and funds raised from this annual event help support the operations and the various ministries of Grace.

SAVE THE DATE

**Three Night Family Winter Retreat for Men & their Children
Camp Soles, PA, Jan. 18-21, 2013**

The Men's Group is sponsoring a get-away Family Winter Retreat over MLK weekend (3 nights, Jan. 18-21, returning Monday, Jan. 22) for men and their children. The setting is Camp Soles in Rockwood, PA, a YMCA camp located in the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania, on the shores of Lake Tris near Somerset (www.campsoles.org). We plan to spend our time playing in the snow with our kids (snowboarding, skiing, sledding) and just enjoying great fellowship together with each other and our children. We will stay in large, rustic cabins with bunk beds (you must bring your own sleeping bag). The cabins consist of one large room with bunk beds to sleep 16. Families will bunk together. The cost for the Retreat is \$124 per person (adults and children), for three nights and five meals (cafeteria style).



To express interest and for questions, please contact Chris Harrington (harrclan@hotmail.com; 301.589.8470) or John Mahler (mahlerjo@gmail.com; 240.505.9610).

Every Member Canvass Update

Our canvass for 2013 continues to go extremely well. As of November 28, we have received **209 pledges for a total of \$524,230.22**, including **33 new pledges**. We want to thank everyone who has made a financial pledge in support of the operating budget for 2013. It is the operating budget that most directly supports our many wonderful, and growing, ministries both within Grace Church and to the wider community. A huge thank you also goes to our canvassers and team captains who made calls to invite all members of parish to participate in the financial support of our mission and ministries.



If you have not yet had a chance to pledge, please know that we would be delighted to hear from you. Every pledge is important and helps to support all ministries at Grace. You can make your pledge by online pledge by contacting our Fiscal Office, Gib Baily, at 301.585.3515 or gbaily@graceepiscopalchurch.org

Advent Traditions for Families



The weeks of December are filled with activities and holiday preparations that themselves can be a source of preparation for the coming of Christ. For children, though, these weeks can come with an emotional ramp-up that they are only now learning to negotiate. The church has some lovely traditions that can help families mark and enrich this Advent Season, so that everyone can slow down and enjoy this period of watching and waiting for the coming of Christ.

The lighting of the candles on the Advent wreath is one such beloved tradition for our church community at Grace. As each week another candle is lit, it becomes a visible symbol marking the progress of the season. Wondering what you can do with that Advent wreath you made on the first Sunday of Advent? Consider turning it into a centerpiece for your supper or coffee table – wherever you gather as a family. Growing up, my brother Paul and I loved the ceremony of lighting the candles, eagerly taking turns adding a new candle each week. Mom and Dad incorporated Advent prayers into our grace at meals, underscoring this season as a special time of year. Here's one such candle-lighting prayer:

*It's dark outside, but a star's in the sky.
Mary and Joseph are passing by.
So let's light a candle to welcome them
as they go on their way to Bethlehem.*

*We'll light our candle at home each day,
We'll light another candle each week and pray...*

*O God, as light comes from this candle,
may the blessing of Jesus Christ come to us,
warming our hearts and brightening our way.*

Another way to mark the progress of Advent is with an Advent calendar. They come in lots of styles from a simple paper calendar with flaps covering each of the days to fabric pockets or painted wooden boxes with cubbies for small items. (The cathedral gift shop has a nice selection.) Many children enjoy this hands-on way of keeping Advent. One of my best friends has one of the

wooden-box-with-cubbies forms. In each cubby she tucks a piece of the family nativity crèche (and usually a sweet, too). As Advent progresses, her son's excitement grows as the crèche itself is built and becomes more detailed.

On December 6, the church remembers St. Nicholas, a 4th-century bishop who may have been present at the Council of Nicaea, which produced the creed we say each Sunday. He was especially remembered as the patron saint of children in need. It was Dutch colonists who brought to New York the tradition of St. Nicholas (whom they called Sinterklaas [Santa Claus]) who, it was said, annually bore gifts to children. As children grow older and begin to question the story of the plump red-suited man with the white beard coming down the chimney, they may find it helpful to know that there was in fact a real bishop who models for us a compassionate concern for children.

The Scandinavian part of my family always remembered, too, the feast of St. Lucy (December 13th). Another 4th-century figure, Lucy had been martyred in Italy for her refusal to deny her faith, and came to be associated with symbols of purity and light. Usually depicted wearing a crown of candles, St. Lucy was surely a welcome visitation of light in those darkest of Norse winter days and a herald of the coming greater light of Christ at Christmas.



Finally, I want to encourage you to remain open to new traditions that your children themselves may help establish. Two years ago in Sunday School, for example, after explaining that the 3rd and pink candle on our Advent wreath marks "Gaudete Sunday" or "Rejoice Sunday" when the angels are said to enlighten the dark with spontaneous songs of rejoicing, the children on their own broke into one of their favorite praise anthems: *Rejoice in the Lord Always!* A 3rd grader reminded me to be sure and keep this tradition of "singing with the angels on the pink day". And so we have.

Perhaps your family, too, will develop special ways to mark the time leading up to Christmas.

Ideas for A More Meaningful Christmas with Children



Christmas has for some become a very stressful time of year. As you add children into your life's equation, the joys increase as do the obligations for yourself and for your children. The authors of "Unplugging the Christmas Machine" highlight four areas of expectation children have surrounding Christmas. Perhaps we can all help ease the stress of what has become an increasingly commercial enterprise by claiming these very basic principles this year.

A relaxed and enjoyable time with family. Most of our children get a fair amount of time off from school or preschool during the holidays. However, with today's work schedules they sometimes end up in special camps or childcare. This means that we need to carve time out after work so that they feel this is truly a special and more relaxed time. To do that we have to unplug the Christmas machine and forgo some of our traditional shopping and other pressures to participate in the burgeoning number of holiday events.

Ideas for A More Meaningful Christmas with Children, cont.

Realistic expectations. Most of us of a certain age sat with the Sears Christmas Book for weeks before Christmas. Many of us were part of one of the first or second generations to over-spend on Christmas. Our children are assaulted with every advertisement medium from digital bus stop terminals to advertisements as part of their clubs at school. One of the biggest fears children have around Christmas is that they will be disappointed. By setting expectations on the number and types of gifts children will receive, we can help stave off disappointment. Surprise is wonderful for children but the flip-side of surprise is that children fear the unexpected.

Evenly paced holidays. Wow, this is really tough. Even here at Grace we have a steady build-up of activities. We all have to be willing to say “no” to some events that intrude into our annual pace. That ski trip that just pops up the week before Christmas can cause more stress if it means we are trying to cram in the other traditions or that we skip much-loved activities all together. Children do not always understand the allocation of time and that doing one thing means cancelling another.

Children crave tradition. Many of us get so busy trying to get gifts purchased and get to one party after another that we skip some of the traditions we as children loved and that we can impart to our children. Children love anticipation of a known event. That event might be as simple as going to the same tree lot each year as a family. However, these traditions unique to your family co-join with events of your community to create a rich fabric children can cling to through good times and bad.

Finally, Grace has wonderful traditions that bind us together. However, these events are not without their scheduling conflicts with other demands. Sitting down as a family and deciding what events mean the most for your family and agreeing to forgo others can help stave off the stress and exhaustion we all feel. Also, there is a gift in saying “no”. Erma Bombeck, the famed author, once said in paraphrase, “Stress is when your mind screams ‘no’ and your mouth says, ‘of course, I’d be glad to.’”

We hope you have a wonderful holiday and that we can help you in any way possible. Much love and peace to all of you.

Grace Church Welcomes the Return of Amahl

Speaking of Christmas traditions at Grace Church - why not make Amahl and the Night Visitors part of your family tradition.

Amahl and his night visitors return to Grace Church again this holiday season – this year on December 15 and 16 - rather than on that first Christmas night.

The story, by the Italian-American composer Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007), is of the little boy, Amahl, who can only walk with the aid of a crutch. Like many youngsters, Amahl struggles with daydreaming and with telling the truth. Because of this, his mother has reason not to believe him when Amahl tells her he has seen a star “as big as a window.” Surprisingly, Three Kings appear at the family’s door, and Amahl’s story is proven true as the Kings tell Amahl and his mother that they are following the same star in hopes that it will lead them to the Holy Child. Amahl and his mother welcome the Kings into their home and invite neighboring shepherds to entertain them while they are resting from their journey. Like the story long ago, Amahl and his mother struggle with what to give this special child, and in their selflessness, a miracle transpires.

This Christmas opera returns after a successful debut in 2011 as a Music of Grace holiday event for the entire family. Produced by Grace’s own Geoff Dirksen, featuring the wonderful Joan Phalen as Amahl’s mother and with two of Grace’s own Junior Choristers in the role of Amahl, many have worked tirelessly on this production. The combined choirs of Grace take on the role of the Shepherds’ Chorus. A cast of many behind the curtain, including theatrical directors, musical director, costumers, choreographers, dancers, promotions staff, reception planners, sound

and lighting techs – and set designers, all combine to make this a most special holiday musical event for our church and community.

Our Amahls went through a competitive audition process and began rehearsing this past summer. They have dedicated much of their free time since then to their leading role. Our young thespians, Katie and Grace, are sure to delight you and old alike with their portrayals of Amahl.

The two performances of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* will undoubtedly be a highlight of our Christmas season here at Grace. All are encouraged to attend one or both performances and invite your friends and neighbors as well.

Tickets are available for :

Saturday, December 15 (7:00pm curtain)

Sunday, December 16 (5:30 curtain)

Tickets can be purchased from a link on the church’s website: www.graceepiscopalchurch.org, after the 10:30 service in the Undercroft and at the door. Adult tickets are \$15.00 and tickets for children under 12 are \$3.00.



Amahl and the Night Visitors is a charming but poignant story that reaches all ages. Please make plans to share in our 2012 Amahl experience.

Winter Garden



This December, children and adults will experience Sunday School differently as we suspend our usual classes and provide an opportunity for those not usually involved in Sunday School to experience church from a child's vantage point. It's a magical time of year, and many adults treasure children's joyful anticipation. After gathering as usual for chapel and prayer, we will break into two (or sometimes three) groups to work on a particular Advent/Pre-Christmas theme:

Week 1 December 2 : Advent Wreath-Making. Here's a way to learn about the season of watching and waiting for Christ's coming by marking the weeks until Christmas with a wreath and candles. Adults will help guide children in fastening greens to frames. This is an activity to put everyone in the holiday spirit.

Week 2 December 9: 'Tis the Season for Giving. Presentations will teach about Grace's work with the homeless in DC and with Shepherd's Table in Silver Spring. Children will learn about how Donuts for Socks got started and how their "sweet tooth" have helped purchase the socks for the homeless. They'll actually roll the socks to be donated and at the offering in church will bring their hampers of socks forward for a blessing.

Week 3 December 16: Fa-La-La-La-La! An old-fashioned carol-sing will help set the mood as children create ornaments for the family tree or cards for someone special.

Do consider signing up (especially if you've never helped before) for these especially fun activities. As with our "Summer Garden" Program, adult helpers will mix "old hands" with newcomers. No experience necessary. If you are interested, please contact Rev. Lael (301-585-3515 or sorensen@graceepiscopalchurch.org) or Sunday School Coordinator Becky Breeden (301-585-3515 or bbreeden@graceepiscopalchurch.org).

The Board of Pennyworth Resale Shop

Wishes everyone a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year



Pennyworth Board Members are: *Louise Clark, Ingrid Abbott, Gib Baily, Grace Shirey, Shashi Ray, Ann Kitts, Ethel Luckett, Kathryn Desmond, Marnie Brown, Cathy Ocheltree, Barbara Libscomb, Jim Doyle, John Mahler*

Volunteers for Board or shop always welcomed.

Try shopping at Pennyworth Shop for very special Christmas gifts.



Pennyworth has been a ministry of Grace Church for almost 60 years and is completely staffed by volunteers.

The shop is open Tues through Saturday from 10 AM to 4 PM and is located at 949 Bonifant Street in downtown Silver Spring. (301-587-6242)

Grace What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher in an Episcopal School?

“Episcopal schools exist not merely to educate, but to demonstrate and proclaim the unique worth and beauty of all human beings as creations of a loving, empowering God.”

National Association of Episcopal Schools

I first taught at Grace Episcopal Day School in 1998. I was hired to teach third grade, a grade I had never taught before, in a parochial school environment I had never experienced. I had fears about how strict such a school might be and how comfortable I would feel. But I loved the three years I taught at Grace; it really was a place of “grace.” Fast forward to 2010, after some years as a full-time stay-at-home mom, it was time to jump back into teaching, and the only place I really wanted to be was Grace School. I am now delighted to be in my third year of teaching first grade. The spirit and inclusiveness that are the hallmarks of an Episcopalian school continue to be in full force at Grace. We are a school that really takes our mission seriously, and we live our lives respecting children as “creations of a loving, empowering God.”

But what does that look like in action at Grace Episcopal Day School?

- ◆ It is a handwritten note to every child the week before school starts from their new teacher.
- ◆ It is the smiling faces in the hallways every morning greeting the children and giving out hugs.
- ◆ It is morning meeting where we greet each other and share plans for the day.
- ◆ It is the acknowledgement that children need to move and

have breaks to assimilate learning.

- ◆ It is younger children sitting for Friday Assembly in the embrace of their older “buddies.”
- ◆ It is a child tenderly asking if a classmate is okay after a fall.
- ◆ It is other children offering to share lunch when someone is without.
- ◆ It is handling discipline in a way that maintains the dignity of the child.
- ◆ It is children preparing sandwiches for the homeless.
- ◆ It is walking past an administrator’s office and seeing three adults pause their meeting to wave hello to a child outside on the playground.
- ◆ It is being a community that, as our school’s mission statement says, “provides every student the opportunity for academic excellence in a caring, nurturing, moral environment that embraces diversity and promotes creativity, self-confidence, and service to others.”



In this season of joy, I feel very blessed to be a part of this special community.

*Pam Yarrington
First Grade Teacher at Grace*



O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;

To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

Refrain

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.

Refrain

O come, Thou Day-spring,
come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death’s dark shadows put to flight.

Refrain

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

Refrain

O come, O come, great Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai’s height
In ancient times once gave the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.

Refrain

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

Refrain

Outreach Opportunities in Advent

The liturgical season of Advent marks the time of spiritual preparation before Christmas. It is a time of preparation, waiting and The Advent Liturgy resounds with the longing cries of the Hebrew prophets, the voice of Jesus, and John the Baptist's preaching that the Lord is near. Advent is a time for preparing our hearts, once again, for the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Outreach Committee is offering several ways in which you can help prepare for the coming of the infant Jesus by reaching out to those in need.



Christmas Food Baskets – Help families in need in our community enjoy a festive Christmas meal with all the trimmings. We collect specific food items that are assembled into Christmas boxes, along with a coupon for the purchase of a turkey or ham, and deliver the “baskets” to needy families in our local community in time for Christmas. Pick up several paper slips identifying food items you can purchase during your next trip to the grocery store and bring them to the Undercroft at any time in December, **but no later than December 16, 2012**. Some parishioners have chosen to assemble an entire box as a family Advent project. If you prefer to give a cash donation toward this project, you can pay for the Giant gift card that gets included in each box! You can obtain your paper slips from June Moore, John Mahler, or at the Sunday School prior to Sunday classes, or at the Donuts-for-Socks and fair-trade coffee table in the Undercroft after the 10:30am worship service. **Contact for Christmas Food Boxes: June Moore (240-461-0014) and moorejune@comcast.net.**



Shoebox Ministry - Help us fill up shoeboxes with toiletry items and other needed essentials for the homeless of Grace's soup-and-sandwiches feeding ministry. We need toiletry items such as soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoos, lotions, small tissue packets, etc. We also need new hand towels, washcloths, socks, knit caps, gloves, scarves and XL T-shirts. On December 23, the Youth Group will assemble and wrap most of the boxes, so **please try to bring your contributions to the Undercroft by December 23**. (We can, however, continue to accept donations up to and including 12 noon on Saturday, January 5th.) **Contact for Shoebox Ministry: John Mahler (240-505-9610) and mahlerjo@gmail.com.**



Angel Tree in the Undercroft – Bring Christmas cheer to our homeless brothers and sisters who live on the streets in our nation's capital. As part of Grace Church's feeding ministry to the homeless (the first Saturday of every month), we deliver Christmas gifts comprised of items such as new boots, new sleeping bags, new backpacks, new hooded sweatshirts, new gloves and winter hats... you get the idea. Be a part of this important ministry by removing one (or more!) of the paper “ornaments” from the Christmas tree in the Undercroft and purchase the item(s) specified on the “ornament” slip(s). This year we are trying to be more “green” so “wrap” your gift(s) in something simple like a large paper shopping bag (or some other more durable bag that the recipient can reuse) -- or just tie a pretty ribbon around the package. Be sure to attach the “ornament” to the outside of your package(s) so we know what's in it, for placement under the Christmas tree at any time in December **up to and including 12 noon on Saturday, January 5th**. The Christmas gifts will be delivered to our homeless brothers and sisters on the first Saturday of January, when we also share with them soup and sandwiches (January 5, 2013). We will need extra hands that Saturday, so contact Erik Olson (erikdavidolson@gmail.com or 301-949-0721) if you also want to help out on January 5. **Contact for Angel Tree: Christy and Gerry Joria (301-929-0275) and cljoria@aol.com.**



Christmas Cookies – Once again this Christmas, we will be delivering bags of cookies to our sick and shut-in of the church. Please bring your home-made or store-bought cookies to the undercroft on **Sunday, December 16**. The cookies will be packaged for delivery following the 10:30 service. Volunteers are needed to deliver the cookies to our sick and shut-in parishioners. Any extra supply of cookies will be packaged, frozen and delivered on January 5 to our homeless brothers and sisters along with all the Christmas gifts. **Contact for Christmas Cookies: Steve Dean (sadbet@comcast.net) and Linda Caleb (linda.caleb@holton-arms.edu)**

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13: 34-35

Fiscal Officer Report

I want to begin my report by saying that I hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday. We certainly have much to be thankful for, including the blessings of a wonderful Grace Church community. Many thanks to all who have kept your pledges current throughout this year and given so faithfully to the special ministries in our parish.

As of today (essentially, with all income recorded for the month of November and nearly all invoices received and paid for this month), we have total income for the first eleven (11) months of 2012 of \$575,068.00, which essentially equaled our 11-month estimate of \$575,704.00 based on the balanced budget approved by the Vestry for 2012. Included in this 11-month total was the combined total of \$46,563.00 in income received during November. Expenses for the first eleven (11) months of 2012 totaled \$607,655.39, which only slightly exceeded our 11-month estimate of \$605,604.00 included in the balanced budget approved for 2012. While there were many offsetting over-runs and savings seen in the operating expenses during the first eleven (11) months of this year, I think that it is safe to say that the over-riding cause of the over-run in expenses reflected the unanticipated costs of tree-removal following the 'freak' storm which hit the Washington, D.C. area at the end of June. A deficit of <\$32,587.39> is seen in the operating budget at the present time (11/25/2012), which is only marginally higher than the deficit of <\$29,900.00> projected to be seen in the operating budget at the end of November 2012.

As outlined in the past, we generally enter December with a budget of this magnitude, and our ability to eliminate this deficit by the end of the calendar year is based on the following three factors -

- there are five (5) Sundays in December, which is somewhat unusual, and our average weekly offering totals approximately \$9,245.00;
- second, our annual Christmas offering generally totals approximately \$10,000.00; and

- third, our annual Holiday Fair generally results in a contribution of approximately \$10,000.00 to the operating budget.

So, the combination of these three factors (keeping pledges current through the end of this fiscal year, including ensuring that the pledge contribution for the last Sunday of the month is received on or before Monday, December 31, 2012; the Christmas offering; and the Holiday Fair) appear to have the potential to generate sufficient one-time revenue to offset the deficit in the operating budget carried into December.

On a slightly separate note, I would like to join others in thanking everyone who has already made a pledge to Grace Church for 2013. Our Every Member Canvass is off to a wonderful start (almost completed by now, actually), and it holds the potential to generate sufficient funds to meet all of our goals for the coming year and to provide funding for increases to our ministries for Sunday School, music, worship and outreach in the year to come. As of today, we have received a total of 205 pledges for a total of \$318,320.22. There are still a few pledges outstanding, and our hope is that we will receive these pledges in the near future so that a preliminary budget can be developed and presented to the Vestry by the early part of December. As discussed in the past, goals this year include providing pay raises for members of the staff, fully funding the new positions for the Director and the Sunday School and the part-time Assistant Organist/Choirmaster, increasing funds for our ministries to children and youth (both in music and in Sunday School), increasing funding for our outreach ministries and our offering to the Diocese, and providing a wide range of support for our ministries of worship and fellowship to meet the needs of our growing parish.

Again, I hope that everyone had a blessed Thanksgiving holiday, and I wish everyone a joyous Christmas holiday as well.

Gib Bailly
Church Fiscal Officer

Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Services



December 24, Christmas Eve

- 5:00 p.m. Christmas Pageant with Eucharist
Reception immediately following
- 8:00 p.m. Festival Holy Eucharist
Singing of Christmas Carols begins at 7:30

December 25, Christmas Day

- 10:00 a.m. Festival Holy Eucharist

Daughters of the King Select Chapter Name



The Grace chapter of the Daughters of the King recently voted to call ourselves the “Neema” chapter of the Daughters of the King. Neema is the Swahili word for “grace,” so once our president, Theresa Wheeler, suggested it, we were all pretty much in agreement that the name fit perfectly. Having the name of our chapter reflect our church’s name in a different language emphasizes our strong connection to our church community and our love of its diversity. In addition, this was a big improvement over the name we were assigned upon induction, “Grace Chapter 1606.”

Daughters of the King around the world commit to daily prayer, service, and evangelism. Prayer comes first because it makes the latter two possible. We pray daily for the church, especially our members and friends on the Grace prayer list, for our clergy, and for Daughters around the world. We do this to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ, and to deepen our relationships with those around us. Each of us prays differently, but for all of us, grace is an essential part of prayer.

The first part of my daily prayer ritual has three parts, and grace informs each of them. I always start with the “thank you” section which could go on for a while because there’s so much to be thankful for. By God’s grace, I woke up alive and healthy, in a warm and comfortable home, surrounded by loving family, food, clothing, and everything I need (plus most of what I want) within reach. “Forgive me” comes next, and that section could go on even longer than the

first. Forgive me for leaving the things I take for granted off of the thank you list, forgive me for all the ways I’ve wronged everyone around me, things I know I’ve done, and things I don’t even recognize as sin. By God’s grace we are forgiven, even though we are undeserving of forgiveness. Finally, I ask God to “help me.” The help section could go even longer than the previous two. Help me to grow closer to God and to those around me. Help me remember the needs of others and of “this fragile earth, our island home.” I couldn’t possibly list all the ways in which I fall short in fulfilling God’s plan for me. But because of God’s grace, he helps us when we don’t even have enough sense to ask.

As Christmas approaches, a communal version of this prayer works just as well. Thank you, God, for by your grace you sent your son to live as one of us, to suffer with us, and to plead for us when we fall short of the goals you set for us. By your grace, forgive us, Lord, for not recognizing the gift you sent us then, or the gifts you send us every day, for walking past the vulnerable, the homeless, and the mentally challenged, without seeing your face in theirs. By your grace, help us to become the people you created us to be, to run with patience the race, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, and with your son, our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

FHS,
Raquel Wilson

One More Note . . . from the Rev. Andrew W. Walter

*This article is adapted from Rev. Andrew’s
Stewardship Sunday sermon.*

It is the Sunday before Thanksgiving. In a few days, our boys will all be home for vacation, and on Thursday, like so many of you, we will gather with friends and family to eat a little turkey and watch a lot of football. Or, is it eat a lot of turkey and watch a little football...? Either way, all of us should be taking a break from our normal routine to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. For some reason, though, my mind is somewhere else today. For some reason, my mind is on Christmas.

This has me feeling a little sheepish because this is how our boys behaved when they were growing up. Every year, at this time, they had the full blown Christmas fever. Forget Thanksgiving. They were well past that. They had already completed their long, exhaustive Christmas lists with everything they hoped to receive on Christmas morning: a new mitt, a new bike, a new batman toy, a Gameboy, a Sony Playstation... The list would go on and on and on. They would take the Toys R Us catalog, which we received in the mail, and circle item after item, page after page. It was ridiculous. It was as if they were saying, “Mom, Dad, we want you to get for us whatever we ask.” It was crazy.

There is a similar story in the Gospels. Jesus and the disciples

were on their way to Jerusalem. In a day or two, Jesus would make his triumphal entry into the city and begin that last, fateful week of his life. James and John, two of the disciples who formed part of Jesus’ “inner circle,” came forward and said to Jesus, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

Who asks such a thing? It seems ridiculous, crazy, and yet, incredibly, Jesus listens to them. He does not dismiss them, or chastise them. He does not seem disappointed in them or angry with them. At Christmas, when our boys would ask us to give them pretty much whatever they wanted, my wife and I had a quick retort: “Yeah... I don’t think so.” Not Jesus. He listened, and he responded.

That is what God is like. That is how God responds to all of us. So many of us bring a long wish-list of prayers to God, asking God to do certain things for us. We want God to change things in our lives, to make our lives better. We want God to fix things. We have ideas about how life and the world should operate, and when things do not turn out the way we expect or plan, we want God to make corrections. We want God to do whatever we ask, rarely taking a moment to ask

(cont. on page 10)

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Of course, that does not mean we will always get what we want. God will answer our prayers, but maybe not in the way we imagine, or maybe not on the timetable we envision. God will respond, though, because God always responds. Our challenge is to trust in that, to trust in God, to open our hearts to God's will and surrender our lives to Him. I know that is easier said than done, but that is the path which leads to healing and wholeness and a better life. We see this throughout the Bible, in the stories of countless people; people like Abraham and Moses, James and John, even Jesus himself, and we can see this in our own lives if we only take the chance.

A few years ago, I knew it was time to leave my old church. As much as I loved being there, I wanted to be a Rector, and not just any old Rector, I wanted to be the Rector of a really happening church, of a place that was alive with the Holy Spirit. After a lot of time and a lot of prayer, I was convinced that this was the place. My wife Susan and I were both convinced this was the place. Still, coming here would mean a big move for me and Susan and the boys. Plus, Susan could not just leave her job so she would have to be in New York during most of the week while I was down here. But, we believed this is where God wanted us to be, and so we took a chance.

Being here as far exceeded our expectations. This is an incredible church! There are very few places like this. We are so blessed to part of a community that is truly alive with the Spirit. While many churches around the country are struggling, Grace Church is thriving. We continually have newcomers walking through our doors, attracted by our diversity and worship and music and the warm welcome which we extend to everyone, no matter who they are. At our Newcomers' Brunch earlier this fall, 43 new members joined our congregation, many of whom were interested in our Men's Group or the Daughters of the King or volunteering with our Homeless Ministry. We have lots and lots of children in our Music program and Sunday School, so many in fact, we have hired a Sunday School Coordinator and an Assistant Minister of Music. We have expanded our opportunities for adults to learn and grow in their faith. We provide pastoral support to our seniors and those in need. The Pennyworth Shop has successfully moved to a new location, and in a few months, celebrates its 60th anniversary, while our Day School has a new Head of School bringing renewed energy and focus to the Kensington Campus. The list goes on and on and on. What we do here is unbelievable!

So, what makes it all possible? How are we able to accomplish all this? The answer is simple – you. Each and every one of you giving so generously of your time and your talents and your money. That is what makes it possible. You make it possible. You make it happen, and as Rector, being able to watch what goes on here is beyond words, beyond description. I have the best job in the world. For me, every day is Christmas because, in this place, I experience that deep sense of joy and peace and love of that comes with God's presence. Christmas is on my mind today, because for me, every day at Grace is Christmas.

So, this week as we pause to offer our thanksgivings, I thank God, and I thank you for everything you do to make Grace... well, Grace. Happy Thanksgiving. And, Merry Christmas.



Have thoughts, comments or questions about Andrew's articles (or even his sermons)? He would love to hear from you.

Please email him at awalter@graceepiscopalchurch.org