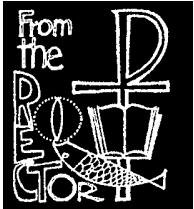




Grace Notes

The Newsletter of Grace Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 18, Casanova, Virginia 20139 (540) 788-4419 December 2009



“Grace Church – Reaching the world for Jesus Christ, beginning in Casanova – Acts 1:8”

RECTOR’S REFLECTIONS

Dear Ones at Grace,

Advent comes each year as a season of preparation for the wonderful feast of Christmas. For most Americans Advent is usually drowned out by the competition of the commercial and social aspects of the Christmas holidays. Some like it that way because Advent is seen as a mini Lent with its penitence and all that goes with it and since we want to have fun at Christmas, we ignore Advent. What’s interesting is that while Advent, which is from originally a season of penitence that was as long as Lent, it was not originally about Christmas at all. Advent was the 6 week season before the feast of the Epiphany. Christmas didn’t even exist as a church feast till centuries after the birth of Jesus. Even at that it was started as a way to enfold the pagan feast of Saturnalia at the change from fall to winter into a Christian celebration. With that, the season of Advent was shortened to the four Sundays before Christmas day and the days between Christmas day (December 25) and the Epiphany (January 6) became the liturgical season of Christmas, also known as the 12 secondary. But Christmas is not unimportant. Why? Was Mark's gospel not sufficient? Why did both Matthew and Luke add stories of the birth of Christ? The answer seems to involve more than human curiosity. Jesus in Mark (and to some extent in John) suddenly appears. His humanity is not self-evident allowing for a belief system surrounding Jesus which could keep him as a mystical sort of spirit only being. (Heresies did develop around this called docetism and gnosticism). The birth stories underscore the human Jesus and tie Him down to a particular place, time, and people—Israel, those who had received the promises of God. Christianity needed Christmas to avoid becoming a mystery cult, overly focused on the death and resurrection of Jesus (and our own dying and hopes beyond death). While this is perhaps the deepest human question (What happens when we die?) Advent and Christmas causes us to also ask another question: (What is the meaning of this life?)

Historically, of course, the root of the church year is the cycle of events of Holy Week, especially Good Friday and Easter. Every Christian weekly worship was a remembrance of Christ "crucified for our offenses and raised for our justification." (Romans 4:25). The modern liturgical movement has emphasized the centrality of this focus with the weekly remembrance of Jesus' saving act through the celebration of Holy Communion. This is the main focus in the New Testament which is cross and resurrection centered. Only small parts of it deal with the birth of Jesus at all. So Christmas is

lem. Any claim for God to be with and in and for the world will sooner or later run the risk of tying God to the world too closely, too uncritically. The commercialization of Christmas, the often uncritical adoption of pagan ceremonies, the confusion of the New World Order with the

Kingdom of God—all of this is already inherent in the risky message that God has entered into human life in Christ. And yet God takes that risk! So even though Christmas is secondary, in the liturgical cycle, it comes first and gives important perspective to the significance of the cross and the celebration of Easter. So don't overlook Advent in the busyness of this season or on the way to the presents Christmas day. It is a season with a message of always looking for God. He came in the flesh in the past and will do so again in the future. And as the name Emmanuel implies, He is with us in the present as well. Have a Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas. Jim+

PROJECT LOGAN PILLOWS FOR PATRIOTS

Our own Logan Shipe has a mission. That mission is to help some of our servicemen and women to be a little more comfortable while they are deployed in a war zone. And he would like you, the people of Grace Church, to help. What we can do is take Logan's mission and partner with others who have the same mission and make it happen. Here's the story.

Comfort is a rare commodity for American soldiers serving overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Harris Pillow Supply is hoping to change

that with its "Pillows for Patriots" program.

The 51-year old family owned company out of Beaufort, SC, launched the initiative in late July after Barb Farrow had come to them seeking materials to make pillows for her Army captain son and his military unit.

Justin Farrow was about to head off to Iraq for his third overseas campaign. Thus, he was quite familiar with how uncomfortable it is to sleep on the ground with only a pack or a rolled up shirt for head support.

Barb Farrow had gotten the idea after watching a segment on The Today Show about a sewing school in Midland Park, NJ, that had sent more than a thousand pillows to troops who had been deployed overseas.

Realizing there was a pillow manufacturer conveniently located in her hometown, she contacted John and Patrick Harris, the father and son team who serve as president and vice president of Harris Pillow Supply.

"We said, 'Well, we'll just do it for you.' We donated the first 250. It kind of skyrocketed," recalled Patrick Harris. "The rest of them — we're not making any money on it — we're donating them at our cost. We're doing them for a dollar and a half a piece." Ordinary-sized pillows would

not work as soldiers have no choice but to travel fast and light. So, Harris Supply chose to make them at a very compact size. So far, over 3,000 pillows altogether have been manufactured and distributed as part of the charitable program.

We want to make that number grow. If you would like to help, then make out a check payable to Grace Church and marked Project Logan in the memo section. Keep in mind that a pillow can be made for just \$1.50 so even a small gift CAN accomplish something. Whatever you may give, we will send the money along to Barb Farrow and let her and Harris Pillow Supply work their magic for our patriots overseas.

Lighting of the Community Christmas Tree

We will once again host the lighting of the Casanova Community Christmas tree which sits in the Casanova Green. The date will be December 6, which is St. Nicholas Day in the church's calendar. Who knows, we may see St. Nick that night. The church will provide soups and chili as well as beverages and we will ask those who come to bring a potluck side dish or dessert to share. In addition to lighting the tree and eating, we will do some caroling both in the Parish Hall and at the tree so remember to bring a flashlight. Please

bring food to the Parish Hall before going to the tree which will be lit at around 5:15 pm.

In October I made 7 home visits, 2 hospital visits, met with 6 people in my office and had 6 “other” visits by phone or some other place. I began teaching a new adult education class on the Book of Romans which should run through the whole school year. I served as “dean for a day” at the Region 13 Clericus meeting leading the meeting on behalf of our dean, the Rev. Jennings Hobson. In addition, I attended both the Fall Clergy Retreat and Fall Camp at Shrinemont. As a VA Defense Force Brigade chaplain, I attended drill one Saturday, made phone calls to some of the VDF volunteers and visited with the 33rd Battalion chaplain on my way to fall camp.

TREASURER’S REPORT OCTOBER, 2009

Income for the month of October was \$9,051.48; expenses totaled \$9,228.37, resulting in a deficit for the month of \$176.89. We also received gifts of \$1,875 for the labyrinth garden and spent \$1,101.76 for the plantings. Our year-to-date income is \$112,566.72 (budget - \$111,117.50.00) and expenses are \$113,997.75 (budget - \$110,650.00), resulting in a year to date deficit of \$1,431.03.

Summary of Jim’s ministry in October of 2009:

Please continue to pray for Grace Church that it will grow spiritually, financially and numerically. If anyone has any questions regarding this report or any financial matter, please feel free to contact me.

Judy Ball
Treasurer

LABYRINTH GARDEN UPDATE

Our Labyrinth Garden has been planted and is very lovely!

Jimmy Walton has built and installed a beautiful natural stone bench at the center of the Labyrinth.

Since we have had so many generous gifts for the garden, our pathway will be built within the next several weeks – it should be accomplished by the time this newsletter is published.

Our next step will be to place benches in the garden and Greg Huddleston and I will be shopping for the benches – we may wait until Spring when there is a better selection. The last step will be to plant low growing shrubs along the pathway, but I believe that also will be done in the Spring.

If you would like to make a contribution, please make your check to Grace Church and note on the check that it is for

the Labyrinth Garden. If you would like to honor or remember someone by your gift, their name should also be noted on your check

I thank everyone again for your generous gifts. Let me know if you have any questions or suggestions.

Judy Ball

Letter of Thanks

Like the lover who can only stammer "I love you, I love you, I love you..." I scarcely know where to begin to offer my thanks for the wonderful surprise last Sunday; you will never know how very, very deeply I am touched yet again by the goodness of our wonderful congregation. Gratitude is indeed one of the emotions least susceptible of expression; Hermann Hesse said "There are some debts

so great that they may never be repaid--" and such is what I have experienced--again--in my time here. Yet it is I who owes Grace the greater debt--for the kind understanding and support through an odyssey of twenty years of worshipping together, for your overshadowing and unflinching love and support, or letting me join your reservoir, treasure trove, school of divine love. If in my time here I have pleased you, to God Alone be the glory; and for my many

"oops" moments, I beg your forgiveness. I remember Grace Church every day in my prayers with gratitude, admiration, and love; I am blessed every week by each of you, and I pray that God may bless each of you all now and always.

With gratitude and love,
Michael

Grace Church

December 2009

<i>SUNDAY</i>	<i>MONDAY</i>	<i>TUESDAY</i>	<i>WEDNESDAY</i>	<i>THURSDAY</i>	<i>FRIDAY</i>	<i>SATURDAY</i>
		1	2 11:00 AM Senior Center	3	4	5
6 Advent 2 Worship 9:00 5:00 PM Casanova Christmas Tree Lighting & Pot-Luck	7 6:30 Vestry Dinner/Meeting	8 *Carolyn Martin	9 11:00 AM Senior Center	10	11	12
13 Advent 3 Worship 9:00	14	15 Jan. Grace Notes deadline	16 11:00 AM Senior Center - Christmas Party	17	18	19 Melba Hendrix* Roger Woorward*
20 Advent 4 Worship 9:00	21	22	23 No Senior Center today	24 Christmas Eve Worship 5 & 10 PM	25 Merry Christmas No services today	26 Carol Grove*
27	28	29	30	31	Jan 1	

Christmas 1 Lessons & Carols Worship 9:00AM			No Senior Center today		Church Of- fice closed	
5:00 PM Healing Ser- vice		Warren Schaeffer*				

* = Birthday #Anniversary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO

Dec 8 Carolyn Martin
 Dec 19 Melba Hendrix
 and Roger Woodward
 Dec 26 Carol Grove
 Dec 29 Warren Schaeffer

Grace Church Serving Schedule -- December 2009

Date	Svc	Day	Lessons	Lector	Acolyte	Altar	Coffee Hosts	
Dec 6	HE 9:00	Adv 2	Canticle 16 Malachi 3:1-4	Philippians 1:3-11 Luke 3:1-6	Betsy Anderson	Jack Perry	Carol Goshorn	Charlotte & Jack Perry
Dec 13	HE 9:00	Adv 3	Canticle 9 Zephaniah 3:14-20:	Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18	B. Gould- thorpe	Madell Day	Barbara Jacobs	Sue Ballentine
Dec 20	HE 9:00	Adv 4	Psalms 80:1-7 Micah 5:2-5a	Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-55	Linda Swann	Jack Perry	Betsy Anderson	Barbara & Greg McLeod
Dec 24	HE 5 PM & 10 PM	Christ- mas	Psalms 96 Isaiah 9:2-7	Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20	Dee Garrett	Madell Day	Betsy Anderson	NONE
Dec 27	HE 9:00 Heal 5 pm	Chrs- mas 1	Psalms 147 Isaiah 61:10---62:3	Galatians 3:23-25; 4:4-7 Luke 1:1-18	Judy Ball	Jack Perry	Charlotte Perry	Judy Shipe & Sharon Woodward
Jan 3	HE 9:00	Chrst- mas 2	Psalms 84 Jeremiah 31:7-14	Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-19a Matthew 2:1-12	Betsy Anderson	Madell Day	Mignonne Spell- meyer	Judy Ball & Barbara Whitbred

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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 Website: gracechurchcasanova.org

Non-Profit Organization PAID Casanova, VA 20139 Permit No. 1

Services every Sunday at Grace Church on Route 602 in Casanova at 9:00 AM, followed by a coffee fellowship and Sunday School for all ages in the Family Center near the church.
