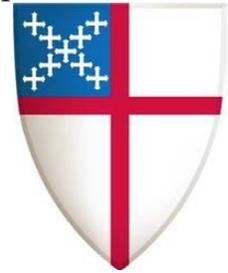


Our Vision: As a welcoming congregation, we share the transformational grace of God through worship and spiritual growth; we glorify God by building up each other and community through love, care, and outreach.



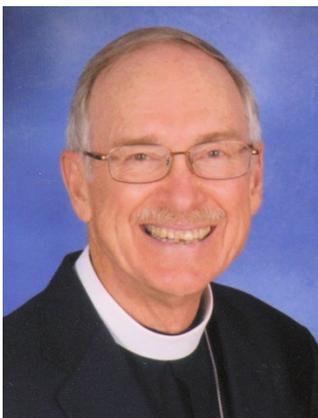
SHARING GRACE

January 2018

A Christian Newsletter of Community Caring of Grace Episcopal

FROM OUR INTERIM RECTOR

Dear Friends-in-Christ,



Welcome to 2018 and a big year for Grace Church. We start the year with our normal Tuesday Healing Eucharist on the 2nd, and then on Saturday, the 6th, we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany at 7PM. I've put together a unique worship service for you. Except for the last Sunday of the month, we'll be on our regular schedule. On Sunday, we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord, and we'll have our own baptisms at the 10AM service. January 28th, will be our Annual Meeting, so our worship will be at 9AM followed by the Annual Meeting and a potluck in the Parish Hall as we await the results of the Vestry and Delegate election.

This Vestry election will be an important one as the new Vestry will be involved in the search for a Priest-in-Charge. The Delegate election will also be important as the delegates selected will not only attend our Diocesan Convention in November but will participate in the election of our new Bishop in February 2019. Nomination papers are attached for the Vestry position. We will receive nominations from the floor, but it is good preparation to have nominations ahead of time.

We had a wonderful Christmas season. Our Christmas Eve service was well attended, and we saw many complete families gathered. Christmas Day service was a little light on attendance, but we had a strange calendar in 2017. Our Christmas Lessons and Carols was great. You are a good congregational choir.

If all goes well, we will bid adieu to our organ on the 6th. We are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the new organ. The timing is not quite clear right now, but we heard that it was in Chicago two weeks ago. (I hope it didn't freeze while there.)

The Epiphany season is a short special one with only six Sundays this year. We are planning a series of sermons on the preacher's favorite parts of the liturgy. Some of us are reading a book on the Book of Common Prayer, and one of the features of our

worship is both the repetition and use of language. Each of us has a part of the liturgy that “speaks” to us. The book we are reading is Inwardly Digest: The Prayer Book as Guide to a Spiritual Life by Derek Olsen published by Forward Movement. We might just use it for our Lenten discussions.

The Pastor’s Forum is back January 14th at 9:15. The group wants to continue a Lectionary study. We’ve had some lively discussions around the scripture readings.

Many of you have asked about David+. He suffered a fall at home in the middle of the night around December 18th. He was in and out of emergency, spent a week in the hospital and was released on Christmas Eve. He is at home recovering. He has a good care giver and she has managed to keep him going. He requests your prayers as this will be a lengthy recovery time. Any of you who have had back injuries know that six weeks is short.

Perry+



FROM GEM

The next GEM Fellowship Breakfast meeting will be Saturday, Jan. 6, 2018 at Huckleberry's Restaurant, 7:30AM meeting start time.

On December 2, 2017, the GEM held their last Fellowship Breakfast for Year 2017. The meeting was short and to the point.

Our follow-up items:

Crab Feed Year 2018. Goal; support Jim Klopstock. Date/time = Saturday, 2/10/18 @ 5:30PM.

-
- Calendar Collection. Goal; assist as needed. Ends Sunday Jan 28, 2018.
 - St. Brigid's Clothing Exchange, in Rio Vista. Goal; show up to assist. Saturday 1/27/18.
-

For Year 2018 the GEM will have a fundraiser. We will work so as not to conflict with the ECW on fundraiser dates and places.

Ron Cupid



FROM ECW:

Thank you to all who attended our Christmas Party Dec. 5th in the Parish hall. Rev. Perry gave the blessing, and we appreciate that he was able to take time out of his busy schedule to attend our party. The food was delicious as always.

We followed lunch with a lively game of gift exchange led by Pat Minkel and Lynne Secrist. A great time was had by all.

A big thank you to all who participated in our recent fundraiser Dec. 10th at Tahoe Joe's Steakhouse. To all who sold tickets, bought tickets and/or donated, we appreciate you all. Our net profit is \$635.88. YEA!

Also a big shout out to Anna Karnopp for our walnut fundraiser. 18 pounds (which she cracked, shelled and bagged) at \$10.00 donation per pound for a total of \$180.00. YEA!

Our next meeting will be Tues. Jan.2, 2018 in room 6 at 11:30am. All women of Grace Church are members. Refreshments will be served. Come join the fun and service.

Love and Belief

Summary of the Year 2017 Church Coat Drive for Fairview Elementary School.

This was the best ever, as far as conducting a coat drive. Thank you Congregation Members of Grace Episcopal Church for donating 31 coats. Compassion, concern and caring are words that come to my mind for describing the Year 2017 coat drive event.

The issuing of the coats went to the families of homeless children and foster children. Mr. Porter, the Principal, had twenty four (24) homeless and foster children assembled in one of the class-rooms and each of the coats were displayed. Each child, girls first and then the boys, selected a coat. Upon selection of the coat a note, to be passed on to their parents, was given to each child referencing the generosity of Grace Episcopal Church for the donation of the coats. This was by far the best coat drive issuing of the church donated coats that I have ever been involved with. The remaining seven coats will be issued to those students in need of a coat.

Ron Cupid

Safety Corner :

Welcoming in a New Year is wonderful and there are new challenges to be met. There is always that personal goal for self-improvement. Self-improvement like personal fitness, dieting and brain health. An easy self-improvement task for personal fitness is walking. So please review some of the safety precautions to take while enjoying the personal fitness activity of walking.

Physical Activity – Walking.

Precautions and Tips for Enjoying Your Daily Walking Routine.

Plan Your Routes:

- Look for paths or sidewalks that are reliably cleared.
- If you don't live in an area with sidewalks or walking paths, choose well cleared roads with wide shoulders and always walk facing traffic so drivers can see you coming.
- Walk indoors, at a large indoor shopping mall.

Dress for Success:

- Wear bright colors and reflective materials to stay visible.
- Wear shoes that fit you comfortably and provide good arch support.

Know When to Say No:

- Check the weather forecast before you head out.

Personal Safety:

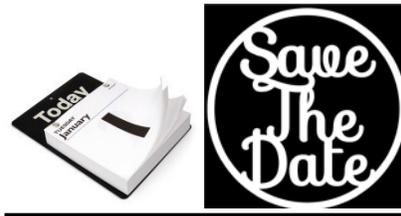
- Walk with a friend for safety and to keep each other company.

Health:

- Check with your healthcare provider before starting an aggressive daily walking routine.

Ron Cupid

Coming Events



Saturday, January 6, 2018, Epiphany service 7:00pm.

Sunday, January 14, 2018 (after each service) Pledge Thank you brunch

Sunday, January 28, 2018 9:00am service and at 10:15AM, the
Annual Church Meeting

Save the Date - Crab Feed, February 10, 2018 at 5:30PM.

See Jim Klopstock for tickets \$50.00 each.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Carlo Teresi	Jan. 15	Matt Thomas	Feb. 4
Jim Klopstock	Jan. 22	Julia Carr	Feb. 7
Anne Prather	Jan. 23	Patty Butler	Feb. 20
		Shane Tyler	Feb. 23
		Roberta Logan	Feb. 27
		Maureen Johnson	Feb. 29

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

<u>November 2017 Income</u>	<u>YTD Income</u>
\$8,775	\$113,956
<u>November 2017 Expenses</u>	<u>YTD Expense</u>
\$10,896	\$130,791
<u>Net Income/Loss</u>	<u>Net Income/Loss</u>
(\$2,121)	(\$16,835)

E-Waste Wanted

If you have ewaste and don't know how to get rid of it, Lynne Secrist will accept: monitors, televisions, desktop and notebook PCs, VCRs, stereo equipment, speakers, keyboards, mice, PDAs, digital cameras, zip drives, telephones, cell phones, printers, copiers, laser and multifunction scanners and fax machines and small household appliances such as toasters, mixers & blenders. It's a fundraiser for local schools. Bring these things to church by Jan. 14 and she'll pass it on.

CHECKLIST FOR THE VESTRY NOMINATIONS

Note: This form has been designed to assist you in the presentation of nominees for election to the Vestry of Grace Church.

PROPOSED NOMINEE'S NAME _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Can you answer affirmatively the following questions?

	Yes	No
1. Have you the person's permission to offer his/her name to the nominating committee?	_____	_____
2. Is he/she 16 years of age or older?	_____	_____
3. Is he/she a confirmed communicant of Grace? <small>(record of baptism must be on file here also)</small>	_____	_____
4. Does he/she attend worship services regularly?	_____	_____
5. Has he/she read the "Expectations of Vestry Members"?	_____	_____
6. If the nominee has served a three-year term on the Vestry, has he/she been off at least one year? (If not a former Vestry member, do not answer this question.)	_____	_____

Please fill in the following information and items of interest about the nominee:

1. Communicant of Grace since _____.
(year)

2. List parish activities in which the nominee has been involved.

Expectations of Vestry Members and Standards for Vestry Meetings

RESPONSIBILITIES

General

- The Vestry is charged with responsibility for the money and property of the Church. Regarding duties, the Canons of the Episcopal Church stipulate that “The Vestry shall be agents and legal representatives of the Parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and the relations of the Parish to its Clergy.” We work together for the good of the whole parish. This includes the review and approval of the annual budget.
- Vestry elections are held yearly during the Annual Parish Meeting in January. The result of the voting is announced one hour after the annual parish meeting.
- Vestry members are expected to commit to serving a full 3-year term, unless there are extenuating circumstances, or the ballot is for a lesser term.
- Vestry members may participate in other parish ministries according to their own skills and desires.
- As spiritual leaders Vestry members also serve the parish by attendance and participation in parish functions: e.g., special congregational meetings, special worship services, etc.
- The work of the Vestry occasionally calls for a sub-committee or task force comprised of members of the vestry. Members may be asked to share in this special work.

MEETINGS

Annual Parish Meeting: All Vestry members are expected to be present at this meeting.

Vestry Retreat: All Vestry members must attend a weekend retreat every year in January or early February. This retreat is traditionally scheduled on the weekend following the annual parish meeting. At this function, Vestry members strive to get to know each other, discuss and choose liaison roles to ministries, review expectations of Vestry members, and talk about the priority tasks of the Vestry for the calendar year.

Monthly Vestry Meetings: All Vestry members are expected to attend a monthly Vestry meeting.

- Meetings are the third Tuesday of each month.
- Meetings begin at 6:45 p.m. in the Chapel for Holy Communion and continue in Room 6.
- A quorum (5) is required to conduct the business of the Church.
- Attendance at all Vestry meetings is very important. If a member must be late or absent, that Vestry member is asked to notify the Interim Rector or the Senior Warden prior to the meeting.

Vestry Meeting Agenda: The agenda is developed by the Senior Warden prior to the meeting.

- Requests to have items placed on the agenda should be made not later than the week before.
- Agendas and previous minutes will be emailed before the Vestry meeting.
- Only items requiring immediate attention should be added to agenda on the night of the meeting.

Special Meetings: Vestry members are expected to attend other meetings.

- The Senior Warden may call ad hoc meetings with respect to matters of immediate or pressing nature e.g.
 - To address items related to the development or passing of the annual budget.
 - Update the Vestry on any unusual or unexpected circumstances requiring their action.

Monday Matters (December 25, 2017)

December 25, 2017

A few years back, as I was working on the Rector's Christmas Sermon, it suddenly began to rhyme. This morning, I share that seasonal doggerel, based on Luke's gospel, with apologies to real poets everywhere. The poem/sermon is based on Luke 2:1-14 included below.

Room for Joy

If I could meet the innkeeper,
The thing I'd want to know
Is why he pointed to the barn
Two thousand years ago.

We don't know much about him.
St. Luke's account is thin
It's up to us to speculate.
Could he have let them in?

Perhaps he acted out of spite:
"There's no space here," he said,
as if he were some ancient Scrooge.
What's going through his head?

It could be he'd just had enough.
The day had left him harried.
This couple was the final straw.
And were they even married?

Perhaps it seemed too troublesome
To welcome as a guest
This pregnant child. Her presence
Might deny him beauty rest.

Or was he snidely mocking them?
"A room? Tonight? From me?
What's the matter?
Can't you read that sign: NO VACANCY?"

"No wait. There is one open room.
I'll book you right this minute.
You'll like it. Lots of nice fresh air.
May I place you in it?"

"No chocolate on the pillows though.
No pillows there at all.
And by the way, you'll share your suite.
You're bunking in the stall."

It may be that he saw a chance
In Joseph's anxious gaze
To make a couple extra bucks
By renting out that place.

"I wonder if they'll go for it"
He ponders at the door
"They must be pretty desperate.
Perhaps I should charge more?"

But maybe there's another way
to think about this guy.
Perhaps he really hoped to help
There's one more thing to try.

It may be true he had no room.
But could he just say no?
These homeless folks in need of help.
He could not let them go.

"This may sound stupid, Joseph.
I know it might not please.
But I've got one small space that's free.
Do you have allergies?"

The innkeep's wife would chide him.
"I know that life is hard.
I'm glad to help the homeless,
But not in my backyard."

We don't know why he sent them there
What moved him, we're not sure.
His choice reflects the ways we choose
with motives rarely pure.

It could have been expedience,
Indifference or pity.
But maybe it was grace that moved him
in that crowded city.

For when he pointed to the barn
That night, it's clear to see.
He made a tiny place for joy
And that made history.

What room do you and I have?
What space for joy, I mean.
It need not be so fancy
It need not be so clean.

We each have got a God-shaped space
(Augustine's line, not mine)
We're restless till it's filled by joy.
That's how we've been designed.

We need not offer up that place
With motives that are best.
We only need to offer it.
Joy sees to the rest.

We're not unlike that innkeeper
With lives preoccupied.
We may think there's no room for joy.
Here are some reasons why:

We may think we're too busy.
Joy will have to wait
It may seem inconvenient.
Please, joy, I'm running late.

I really should make room for joy.
Some time to just be merry
Perhaps a week from Tuesday.
I'll look in my blackberry.

This busy season crowds out joy
I bet some still are hoping
To make a few more purchases
Is the mall still open?

And what if I receive a gift
And I have none in kind?
What if they spent a whole lot more?
Can joy survive that bind?

Family tensions crowd out joy:
Will siblings start in fighting?
Will parents push my buttons
old arguments igniting?

The fact is, sometimes space concerns
are deepest felt inside.
There's no room left within closed hearts.
A fact we try to hide.

For many, night is just too dark.
The pain keeps joy at bay.
That's why this story matters most.
It says: Joy finds a way.

Let every heart prepare a room.
Let heav'n and nature sing.
Joy to the world. Our leap of faith.
The message angels bring.

It's message of the gospels,
Echoing Isaiah.
Good news to hapless shepherds:
Joy will find a way.

What is this thing called joy, you ask
I'd really like to try some
Can I put it on my credit card?
Is that the way to buy some?

Some suspect that joy is found in
toys that we obtain
Children of all ages look
That way to ease the pain

Is joy found in a fancy car?
Or in the Dow's expansion?
Is joy found in a zip code
Or in a new macmansion?

Joy can trump our circumstance
For folks who have it all
Can seem, of all, most miserable
How paradoxical!

But joy is not the stuff we own.
It's not a pedigree.
It's not a corner office.
It's not theology.

Joy arrives in person
In this dark world of sin.
Joy shows up in that small boy
Can we let him in?

This holy child of Bethlehem
(the joy for which we pray)
casts out our sin and enters in
Is born in us today.

And when joy grows within our lives
with new life from above,
It brings the news in person,
who tells us: God is love.

It's not too late to meet him.
He's met in neighbors now.
And when we offer thanks to God
Joy breaks through somehow.

Joy comes in bleak midwinter.
Joy comes in silent night.
Joy comes in land of darkness deep.
Joy comes with dazzling light.

The innkeeper turns out his lamp.
He's finished washing dishes
It's been a busy weekend.
For quitting time he wishes.

He wonders what is going on
With that young couple there.
Maybe he should take a look.
He's way too tired to care.

But wait, he's hearing footsteps.
And many happy voices.
A flock of sheep in his backyard
A company rejoices.

As he goes to check it out.
The cry comes: "It's a boy!"
His barn now a delivery room
A room made just for joy.

"With God all things are possible."
To Mary, message sounds.
She's smiling broadly, pondering
Could joy know any bounds?

It's getting weirder, there's no doubt.
The innkeeper is nervous.
The gath'ring in his stable's
looking like a worship service.

The sign that says "NO VACANCY"
Still flashes in the night.
But it seems much, much dimmer now
There is a brighter light.

He simply cannot help himself.
He smiles to see that boy.
Surprised by what he learned that night.
"There's always room for joy."

We learn the same thing as we meet
and honor Christmas Day.
For with sweet little Jesus boy
Joy will find a way.

-Jay Sidebotham

Luke 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from
Emperor Augustus that all the world should
be registered. This was the first registration
and was taken while Quirinius was governor
of Syria. All went to their own towns to be
registered. Joseph also went from the town
of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of

David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see-I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

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RenewalWorks is a ministry of Forward Movement.

www.renewalworks.org



Rev. Jay Sidebotham

Monday Matters (December 18, 2017)

[December 18, 2017](#)

Bearing witness

If you've been hanging around church this December, you couldn't help but run into John the Baptist. He gets star billing in Advent. He has a lot to say. Jesus spoke about his greatness. That greatness is underscored by the fact that each gospel gives him plenty of air time and that the church calendar tells his story many times throughout the year. So what is it about this guy?

If he came to my church, I'd be more inclined to call security than to invite him into the pulpit. A Dale Carnegie drop out, he opened up sermons calling his congregation a brood of vipers. (Sort of the anti-Joel Osteen.) Flannery O'Connor once said: You shall know the truth and the truth will make you odd. She might have been thinking of John the Baptist.

Yesterday in church, we read about him, as described in the prologue to John's Gospel, an overture to the grand themes of that soaring gospel. The fact that John the Baptist finds his way into those opening verses suggests his significance. The prologue is included below—it contains this line: *John came to bear witness (or testify) to the light. He was not the light but came to bear witness (or testify) to the light.*

I have a feeling that's the key to his significance, and why he has something to teach us. He knew how to bear witness. In the passage from John's gospel, John is repeatedly asked "Who are you?" He's not the Messiah. He's not Elijah. He's not a prophet. He's a voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord. John the Baptist knew who he was, knew who the Messiah was, and knew they weren't the same person. Many leaders, religious and otherwise, haven't gotten that memo. I suspect that many of us, in secret corners of our hearts, conflate the two.

In his book, *Everything Belongs*, Richard Rohr talks about John the Baptist's brand of wisdom. He writes: Religions should be understood as only the fingers that point to the moon, not the moon itself. Often in western Christian art, John the Baptist is shown with arm extended, index finger pointing beyond himself. He points to Christ on the cross. In the artist's eye, John is bearing witness. Would we be depicted that way?

Episcopalians often find language of witness to be foreign, something other traditions do, but not for polite company. Episcopalians often rightly and sometimes reactively resist tendencies of religious folks who seek to confirm they are right by pointing out where others are wrong, by compelling agreement or coercing conversion.

But what if bearing witness is simply about sharing what we have seen of God's grace in our lives, news a grace-starved world is dying to hear? How would you describe that kind of good news in your own life? When and where have you been graced? How would you talk about that gift? Maybe you want to try that over Christmas dinner?

I'm forever indebted to young people I worked with in Chicago who taught me about God-sightings, noting where in the course of the day, they saw God's activity, talking freely about it. Simply. Authentically.

And what if bearing witness takes place not only with our lips but with our lives. In one of his sermons, John the Baptist talked to soldiers and tax collectors, people in positions of power. He said if you want to bear witness, stay right where you are and do your work with integrity. Do not abuse your power. Practice justice and mercy. Share if you have more than you need. These are all ways of bearing witness.

Prepare for Christmas this week by thinking of a couple ways you could bear witness to Christ coming into the world, full of grace and truth. Point to the light of the moon, so surrounded by darkness.

-Jay Sidebotham

The Prologue to John's Gospel

(Note the second paragraph which speaks of John the Baptist)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Weekly Words of Wellness
The Rev. Dr. Scott Stoner

The Living Compass Wellness Initiative
December 15, 2017

Sharing the Light

I was reminded last night of an important lesson that candles have to teach us. I had the honor to co-facilitate a Living Compass Wellness Circle at Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Mequon, Wisconsin over the last six weeks and last night was our closing session. Each person was invited to share what they had learned during the program and as they did so, they each came forward and lit a votive candle, placing it around a large pillar candle in the center of a table.

Some of the participants lit their candles from the central pillar candle while others lit theirs from the votive candles that were already lit. Each time I observed a person lighting their candle I was reminded of the wisdom that a single candle can light a thousand other candles, and yet doing so never diminishes its own light. While it was not necessarily a new lesson for me, it was good to be reminded of it, especially as we approach the darkest day of the year. It is good to remember that it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness, whatever form that darkness may take.

Candles are an essential part of two religious traditions that are both happening right now. Our Jewish friends began the celebration of Hannukah this week and Christians continue their observance of the season of Advent, preparing for Christmas. The central ritual of Hannukah involves lighting the menorah with its nine candles. The shamash candle, the taller candle in the center, is used to light one additional candle each night of Hannukah, until, over the eight days of Hannukah, all of the candles are lit. Similarly, the observance of Advent includes a wreath with four candles, often placed around a center candle. In each of the four weeks of Advent, an additional candle is lit, often from the center candle as well.

For Jews, the candles of the menorah recall the miracle that occurred when one day's supply of oil lasted eight days during the purification and rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem over two thousand years ago. For Christians, the candles symbolize the light of Christ that came into the world to overcome the powers of darkness. Followers of both faiths commit to not let the light go out, to keep the miracles of light and love burning brightly, sharing it with others whenever possible.

I came across a quote from a rabbi by the name of David Wolpe sometime ago that continues to inspire me. "The shamash is the candle that lights the other candles. Be a shamash." I was reminded of this just the other day when someone called to thank me for something little I had done that meant a great deal to them. If they had been able to see my face, they would have seen that it was lit up with a big smile. In that moment, with a simple expression of gratitude and kindness, this person was being a shamash.

What opportunities will you have today, this week, this holiday season, to be a shamash? And remember, as you go around being a shamash to others, your own light will never diminish-in fact, you may even find your inner light burning just a little brighter.

Weekly Words of Wellness The Rev. Dr. Scott Stoner

The Living Compass Wellness Initiative Christmas, 2017

The Wonder of Changing the Way We See

Wonder is a movie that stays with you long after you see it. It is the story of Auggie Pullman (played by 11-year old Jacob Tremblay), a fifth grade boy who has a craniofacial difference due to having been born with Treacher Collins syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. After years of being home schooled by his mother (played by Julia Roberts), his parents make the scary yet brave decision to send Auggie to middle school. As if going to middle school isn't hard enough for anyone, Auggie and his family know that the potential for other kids to be cruel to him could be more painful than the twenty-seven plastic surgeries he has already endured.

I won't share any spoilers here-well, maybe one, which just happens to be my favorite line in the movie. During a pivotal part of the movie, speaking to a student that has been suspended for bullying Auggie, the principal of his school says, "Auggie cannot change the way he looks. But maybe we can change the way we see." While seeing this movie this past week, this quote helped me to put into words something of the meaning of Christmas. The message of Christmas is that through the birth of Jesus, a radical new understanding of love was born into the messiness of our ordinary lives. And at the heart of this message of love made incarnate is an invitation to change the way we see.

You and I are also confronted with the same choice each day that the middle school classmates of Auggie Pullman had to face in the movie. We can choose to see the world and the people around us through the constricted filter of judgment and of what we think is important, or we can choose to see

the world and those around us through the expansive filter of love and what God shows us is important.

"Love came down at Christmas," is a line from a familiar hymn sung this time of year. As we celebrate that Love, may we allow it to change the way we see, enhancing our capacity to see the wonder that is in each and everyone we encounter.

Going to movies is a holiday tradition for some, and so if *Wonder* is still showing in your community, give yourself a gift and go and see it.

Merry Christmas from all of us at Living Compass.

The Salvation of ‘Napalm Girl’

I still need treatment for the burns on my arms, back and neck. But my heart is healed.

By

Kim Phuc Phan Thi

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You may not recognize me now, but you almost certainly know who I am. My name is Kim Phuc, though you likely know me by another name. It is one I never asked for, a name I have spent a lifetime trying to escape: “Napalm Girl.”

You have probably seen my picture a thousand times. Yes, that picture. The image that made the world gasp. Some called it a turning point in the Vietnam War—a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of me in 1972, age 9, running along a puddled roadway in front of an expressionless soldier. I was photographed with arms outstretched, naked and shrieking in pain and fear, with the dark contour of a napalm cloud billowing in the distance.

My own people had dropped bombs on Route 1 in an effort to cut off the trade routes for the Viet Cong rebels. I had not been targeted. I had simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Those bombs have caused me immeasurable pain over the course of my life. Forty-five years later I am still receiving treatment for the burns that cover my arms, back and neck. But even worse than the physical pain was the emotional and spiritual pain. For years I bore the crippling weight of anger, bitterness and resentment toward those who caused my suffering. Yet as I look back over a spiritual journey that has spanned more than three decades, I realize the same bombs that caused so much pain and suffering also brought me to a place of great healing. Those bombs led me to Jesus Christ.

My salvation experience occurred on Christmas Eve. It was 1982. I was attending a special worship service at a small church in Vietnam. The pastor, Ho Hieu Ha, delivered a message many Christians would find familiar: Christmas is not about the gifts we carefully wrap and place under a tree. Rather, it is about the gift of Jesus Christ, who was wrapped in human flesh and given to us by God. As the pastor spoke, I knew in my heart that something was shifting inside of me.

A decade removed from the defining tragedy of my life, I still desperately needed peace. I had so much hatred and bitterness in my heart. Yet I was ready for love and joy. I wanted to let go of my pain. I wanted to pursue life instead of holding fast to fantasies of death. When Pastor Ho finished speaking, I stood up, stepped out into the aisle, and made my way to the front of the sanctuary to say “yes” to Jesus Christ.

When I woke up that Christmas morning, I experienced my first-ever heartfelt celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. I know what it is like to experience terror, to feel despondent, to live in fear. I know how wearying and hopeless life can be sometimes. After years in the spiritual wilderness, I felt the kind of healing that can only come from God.

I had spent so much of my life running—first from the bombs and the war, then from communist Vietnam. I had always assumed that to flee was my only choice. Looking back, I understand the path I had been racing along led me straight to God. Today I live at ease. Yes, my circumstances can still be challenging. But my heart is 100% healed.

My faith in Jesus Christ is what has enabled me to forgive those who had wronged me—no matter how severe those wrongs were. Faith also inspired me to pray for my enemies rather than curse them. It enabled me not only to tolerate those who had wronged me but to love them.

No matter what type of pain or sorrow you may be experiencing, as Christmas approaches, I encourage you not to give up. Hold fast to hope. It is hope that will see you through. This peace I have found can be yours as well. I pray that it finds you this Christmas.

Ms. Kim is the author of “Fire Road: The Napalm Girl’s Journey through the Horrors of War to Faith, Forgiveness, and Peace” (Tyndale Momentum, 2017). She lives in the Toronto area.

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January 2018 Sunday Altar Schedule

Position	January 6 Epiphany	January 7 Epiphany 1	January 14 Epiphany 2	January 21 Epiphany 3	January 28 Epiphany 4
		8 AM	8 AM	8AM	
EM		Charles Karnopp	Jim Klopstock	Evelyn Wickham	
Acolyte					
Lector		Ellie Kulseng	Gary McEachnie	Dayna Lambert	
Usher/Greeter		Gary McEachnie	Carol Allen	Ron Cupid	
Campus Monitor			Linda Chandler		
	7PM	10 AM	10 AM	10 AM	9AM Only
EM	James Fulmer	Scotty Hodges	Janet Heise	Matt Thomas	Carolyn Sheldon
Acolyte			Marissa Grimes	Wyatt Thomas	Jack Flynn
Lector		Phyllis Riley	Joe Harper	Lynn Thomas	Veronica Cupid
Usher/Greeter		Peter Minkel	Nora Del Ross	Tom & Mary Ann McKinney	Peter Minkel Suzie Peterson
Campus Monitor		Lynn Thomas	James Fulmer		
Altar Guild		Jan 6-Jan 19 Pat Minkel		Jan 20 – Feb 2 Carol Allen	
		Marajeane Scarfe			

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Organist
Senior Warden -
Junior Warden -
Treasurer-
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Gretchen Smith
Carol Allen, Linda Chandler, James Fulmer, Janet Heise, Scotty Hodges,
Jim Klopstock, and Lynn Thomas.
Staff: Office Mgr./Bookkeeper: Kim Worthen

Our Mission:

Welcome • Transform
Build Up • Reach Out • Glorify God

PLEASE NOTE :

Sharing Grace Articles are due by the **20TH OF EACH MONTH**. Please email submissions to gracechurchff@sbcglobal.net as the office staff is consolidating information for the rector.

