Grace is ALIVE and accessible in several ways

For those with access to a computer, smart phone, the internet, Facebook, YouTube twice each week you are receiving E-Notes with links to our services of worship, registration access, Bible study, community activities, Sunday School news, youth activities, Zoom prayers and meetings, mission-outreach needs, Preschool information, and ways to give to Grace without leaving home.

Also there are links to clergy and staff emails, Facebook posts and videos.

If you are not yet receiving E-Notes, please email comm@graceunitedmethodist.com or call the church office and leave a message.

For those who are not technologically connected, Grace Notes is mailed to you monthly in hard copy to let you know what is happening, that you are remembered and cared about.

Sermons - birthdays - music news - activities and meetings - altar flowers - outreach opportunities

**GRACE IS YOUR CHURCH**

“We seek to act so that God's love is felt by all”

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**SUNDAYS AT 10:00 A.M.**

(or on the Grace YouTube channel at your convenience)

The Grace community has been unable to worship in person in the sanctuary since early March, but we have been blessed to be able to worship virtually on Sunday services led by our clergy, musicians, and representatives from our church family.

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Each Sunday at 12 noon on the lower parking lot, worshipers are invited to come to a brief service of Holy Communion. Please sign up in advance on E-Notes or call the Church office. Safety protocols are observed.
Congratulations to those of the Grace Church family celebrating birthdays in September:

1. Dr. Emora T. Brannan, Kemp Heath, Steve Mullan, Joyce O’Dwyer
2. Cory Farrugia, Patrick Onley
3. Jack Grandsire, Tyler Wellener
4. Kimberly Stansbury
5. Scott Bayne, Virginia Green, John Harris, Cath LaCosta, Bradley Reppert
6. Avery Paul, Ann Kaiser Stearns
7. Gail Roche
8. Devan Muhly, Kathleen Phelps, Nick Stetz, Kacey Shanon Thomas
9. Alverta Conyers, Stephen Frank, Jr., Ray Howington, Susan Wallace
10. Kendall Hayes
11. Nathan Ander, Howard Francis, Cyndi Greenberg, Lawrence Griffith, Paul Redline
12. Laura Gamble, Hawon Lee, Sharon McIntire, Ben Starkey, Tyler Wasylak
13. Elizabeth Bissett, Rebecca Guth
14. John Casey
15. Melayn Dorfler
16. Trey Heath III, Jonathan Perry
17. Mari Berzins, Virginia Starkey-Stephen, Gordon Stetz, Ethan Weidner
18. Terry Kneip
19. John G. Danz, Jr.
20. Jennifer Covington, Ilva Doggett, Butch Sharpe
21. Sean Harris, Irene Moses, Betty Jean Tyler, Josh White
22. Edith Scouten
23. Susan Clark, Michael Madsen, Greg Wasylak
24. Diane Cole, Heather Grandsire, Diane B. Topper

Book Club

The book club selection for September 14th is *The Island of Women* by Lisa See. This book is the 2020 selection for the One Maryland One Book. We have read these books in the past and they are always well written and generate wonderful discussions.

This story is about two women living on the Korean island of JeJu and their decades-long friendship. They are members of the all-woman diving collective which harvests seafood from the ocean bottom.

To be a part of the Zoom gathering, please contact Maureen Danz at maur.danz@verizon.net and she will forward the link to you. The virtual meeting begins at 7:00 p.m.

FOR SEPTEMBER

(allow will be billed only if flowers are used)
The flowers on the altar are given to the Glory of God and...

September 6 in loving memory of Milton Volker by his wife Pat
September 13 in loving memory of Eleanor Crocker on the anniversary of her birth by her cousin Letitia Swam, and in loving memory of Ruth Ann Beachler by Lynn and children
September 20 in loving memory of their parents, Mr. & Mrs. M. Nelson Bond, Jr. and grandparents, Mr. & Mrs. W. C. Scott by Kitty Allen and Barbara Bond
September 27 in loving memory of Rev. Mark Boling by his wife Francette, and in loving memory of “Ike” Simmons by Glenn and Kittie Simmons

ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORS FOR OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

October 4 Debby Jencks and Diane Topper
October 11 Tom Lynn and Sara Nichols
October 18 Jeaneen Wingate and Claire Greenhouse
October 25 Janet Ander (1) and ________
November 1 Dick Frank and Peggy McCabe
November 8 Carol Polk and Tonya Sare
November 15 Pat Volker (1) and ________
November 22 Pat Boughter and Carole McCrory
November 29 __________

Please contact Claire Greenhouse if you are interested in remembering someone by sponsoring an altar flower arrangement: 410-337-7404 or aschoolrn@verizon.net.

Dr. Sutherland continuing

We are delighted to announce that Dr. Arthur Sutherland, Grace’s Theologian-in-residence for 2019-2020 will be continuing his work at Loyola University Maryland and staying at Grace for another academic year.

His office has moved to the second level in the Upper Room. He will be preaching and teaching here in addition to his academic endeavors at Loyola.
Pentecost IX
Romans 1:1-17 and Excerpt from Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
August 2, 2020
Sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. Amy P. McCullough

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in 1906, growing up in a suburb of Berlin, one of seven children he described as close knit and happy. As a teenager, Bonhoeffer knew he wanted to study theology. During seminary, he distinguished himself as a piercing, creative student, who presented a doctoral thesis at age 21. Bonhoeffer was a pastor and teacher, teaching in Germany as well as the United States. In 1933, he left Germany for London as the Nazi government increased its power, but he returned shortly thereafter to lead an underground seminary, whose purpose was to train young pastors speaking truth against Hitler. Bonhoeffer’s book Life Together is the product of his years living amongst these ministers-in-training. And here he reflects on the power of being formed into a Christian community and the way such formation offers the grace to keep living even in unimaginable circumstances.

His sentence – “We should not take for granted the privilege of moving amongst other Christians” - was written amid a time and place where that privilege was threatened. It’s also poignant to be read today, amongst the realization of how much we took for granted the privilege of gathering together physically. His assertion – “We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ” - is a bold statement, reminding readers weary of war and us, carrying our own particular weariness, that life is held together not by our own power but by the untiring efforts of God.

I’ve been thinking lately about the forceful nature of the pandemic, wondering about its ability to splinter our sense of togetherness. Bonhoeffer’s writings came as a tonic to my weariness, just as his life is a testament to resisting those forces that attempt to defy God. Social distancing, and its accompanying practices, decrease the virus’s spread and are absolutely exactly what we are to do right now. The practices also are the opposite of our instinctive pull toward one another. We want to hug, shake hands, or pull a chair closer to better hear our neighbor. I notice the push toward physical closeness and the pull against it for safe practices most often when I’m running. I began my route, making sure I have a face mask. I start out, pounding down the sidewalk hyperconscious of those ahead or behind me. Whenever there is someone moving toward me from the opposite direction, one of us will cross to the other side. If that isn’t possible, then one will step onto the road or into the grass, finding a way to keep a wide distance from the other. Block after block, I keep scanning for potential encounters. And my brain almost feels as if it is being re-conditioned. It is a small analogy, I know, but I find myself grieving the distance and wondering how long we will live amid this crisis.

What Bonhoeffer teaches us is that the Christian community is, by God’s grace, designed to withstand crisis. It is built upon a cross, after all, a cross that leads to a tomb beside which others weep. And then the tomb cry opens up to Resurrection. You are teaching me how to remain connected amid the crisis, via Facebook comments, emojis, socially distant walks and Zoom chat rooms. Distant, yes, but not disconnected; still linked by the instinct to live life together.

For his participation in the resistance to Nazi rule, Bonhoeffer was imprisoned and eventually executed. One biographer, in summoning up Bonhoeffer’s impact on the Christian church, used the ancient words of Tertullian to characterize his life, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” It is a stark phrase, but one no less true in its starkness. The willingness to sacrifice, risk, relinquish whatever is not of God and accept the consequences of such acts does, in fact, create a birthplace for God’s new life. It is in our ability to face the suffering that we are empowered to enter into that death-into-life movement of God.

This morning we will think about Christian community through Paul’s writing in Romans, the first seventeen verses of the first chapter. We’ll be exploring the book of Romans throughout the month of August. I invite you to take the time during the week to read through these chapters. Romans is considered Paul’s masterpiece; a mix of steady, foundational theology, soaring rhetoric, and the acute insights of a seasoned, beloved pastor. Even if you don’t think you are familiar with Romans, you probably are. It is in Romans that Paul writes about the good he wishes he did and the sin he can’t help himself from doing. It is in Romans that we find the assurance to hope for what we cannot see and the promise that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Romans was central to the theology of Martin Luther and his writings about justification by faith become the basis of the Reformation. And it was while hearing Luther’s writings on Romans that

John Wesley, Methodism’s father in faith, found his heart strangely warmed. Christian theology is indelibly marked by Paul’s wrestling with the work God accomplished through Christ in Romans.

Now the church in Rome was a tiny church. In a city of about one million people, the Christian community is considered to be somewhere between two dozen and two hundred. And yet the faith of this community, Paul claims, is known throughout the world. Paul asserts their faith has a global impact having never visited the church! Rather, he is longing to meet them, to worship with them and hopes to get there soon. In fact, Paul will die in Rome. Here is the power of Christ moving to create a community despite distance. Here is a community formed, through pen, paper, couriers, and prayer, all instruments by which God’s love remakes lives.

Today’s text has three short lessons. First, what we gain in Christian community is mutual encouragement and mutual encouragement should not be underestimated. The word mutual is critical here. Paul begins saying I want to see you because I want to share a spiritual gift with you. In other words, I want to visit you because I have something unique I must impart to you. But quickly he corrects himself, writing I long to see you so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith. Now he is being honest; it is not just that you need to see me. I need to see you. The Christian faith is not a solo endeavor; it exists in and for community. In community we bear each other’s burdens, offer a word of wisdom, wipe each other’s tears, and know the power of someone else’s prayers. In this painful time when how we interact has been so radically altered, Christ’s spirit moves, even in our distance, to make us into something new.

The second lesson comes through Paul’s bold assertion: I am not ashamed of the gospel. How do we understand Paul’s use of the phrase ‘I am not ashamed?’ Is he thinking about the shame of the cross, the scandal of a crucified Lord? Is he thinking about the social status of Christians, for many communities drew from the undignified, uneducated, or scorned? Fleming Rutledge offers a different idea. She suggests Paul is saying: I am not ashamed of my need for God. To be open to God’s power, she writes, we have to admit that we need it. And, for many of us, educated, comfortably clothed and fed, it is difficult to admit just how much we need God’s grace. It might be acceptable to say we need a little help or a slight touch-up. But Paul admits, I am in dire need of God and I am not ashamed to confess it.

It is alarming to witness the life and death stakes of this present time, to see the desperate need in the world for the righting of wrongs, the controlling of a virus, an open path toward dignified life for those once scorned. And yet, here the Christian community can admit these truths with courage. We are not ashamed of our dependence upon God’s direction, nor will we hide that we owe our lives to God’s grace.

Admitting our need of God and one another unleashes God’s power. This is the point toward which Paul drives, which he calls the righteousness of God, given to us through faith, for faith. The whole of Romans is a teaching about how to understand and recognize the righteousness of God.

The term righteousness often conjures up images of overly pious people, maybe holy hermits, or those who meticulously count the markers of faith. But the righteousness of God is Paul’s term for God’s never-ending, always-active promise to us for life. It is a combination of God’s ability to fulfill promises and to restore relationships. It is a verb more than a noun. It is God’s endless activity to bring healing, mercy, nourishment, justice, and love to every one of us. And it is the endpoint to which our community travels.

I’ve always marveled at the courage of Bonhoeffer, who had the option in 1939 to stay in the safety of the United States and wait out World War II. Bonhoeffer traveled on one of the last ships to return to Germany before the outbreak of war. I suspect it was the courage of someone who knew what his life was to stand for and who loved his particular community of Christians. What power. It is the same power that was in John Lewis. I’m also struck by what Bonhoeffer, living in an underground seminary, names as resources to access that courageous power. He cites the nearly ordinary actions of Christians: prayer, mutual encouragement, service, confession of our radical need of God. What power can we access together? And what is calling out to us, to be reborn?

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Virtual Organ Dedication Concert

Watch E-Notes, the Grace website and Grace’s Facebook page for information about an upcoming Organ Dedication concert sometime this fall! With the organ renovations now complete, it is time to officially dedicate the organ and consecrate it for the service of God. Be watching Grace’s communications for an announcement of this special date.

Zooming to North Castle for Vacation Bible School!

Carolyn Young, Director of Children’s Ministries

VBS 2020 was like no other. We’re so thankful for the many sources of technology (and parents!) that came together to create a great week for kids, from age 3 – grade 5!

Grace’s very own Knights of North Castle enthusiastically enjoyed their “Quest for the King’s Armor” and ‘armored up’ for God. Mornings began and ended in prayer. The knights laughed, learned, and had fun with Sparky, the friendly dragon (Pastor Dane makes a great puppeteer).

Each day the children were delightfully enlightened with the true meaning of wearing the Belt of Truth, and how the Bible describes truth as a belt that holds them up in times of trouble. With the Breastplate of Justice, children learned that God is a God of justice. With the Shoes of Peace, Mary took one step of faith and embraced her calling. Likewise, the shepherds took steps of faith to tell others what they had witnessed and our children learned what it means to take their own steps of faith today, and when they do, to carry peace into the world. They learned to wear the Helmet of Salvation, to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power” when facing dangerous or scary times, and how they can choose to be like Paul. Lively music and movements, fun arts and crafts, exciting science activities and unbelievable virtual field trips rounded out a great week. We are looking forward to next year! Special thanks to Rebecca Farace, Pastor Dane, Rev. Amy, and Diane Lesman for all your work, contributions and support in making VBS a total success.

GRACE PRESCHOOL WILL OPEN 9/1

There are a few openings in some classes - contact tamijames.gracepreschool@gmail.com for more information.

CAROL KOEHLER RETIRED

Carol Koehler has retired from teaching at Grace Preschool after being a part of the preschool community for over 36 years. Carol came to Grace as a parent and had four children graduate from the Kindergarten. Not wanting to leave our dear school, Carol started to work as a sub and with the Parent Toddler class. She then became an assistant for a few years before becoming the head teacher for the Twos and Threes age groups. Hundreds of children and parents have been the beneficiaries of this wonderful woman’s loving care, counsel and guidance. Her heart was there for everyone she came into contact with. Her passion for working with young children was inspiring. Carol will be missed in so many ways, for she took care of us all!

We thank her from the bottom of our hearts and we wish her well.

Fortunately, we will still be able to see her for she is just over the playground fence!

If you wish to send a card or note: 5401 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21210 un.carol.koehler@gmail.com.

- Barbara Blair
Greetings from the Zimmermans, missionaries in Nepal

Who has the wisdom to count the clouds?
Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens when the dust becomes hard and the cloths of earth stick together? Job 38:37,38

19 June 2020

Dear Friends,

I slip from under the covers and pad into our study, but even before I’ve donned my clothes, plaintive whines begin drifting down the stairwell. Bella’s our five-year old cocker spaniel, jet-black with a splash of white on the chest, chocolate eyes and a tail left long, through which she thrums perpetual exuberance. I release her cage door and have to indulge hand licking lest her barking wake the rest of the house. “Okay, okay. We’re going now. We’re going. Cool your engines, Miss.” I remove two canvas shopping bags from behind the kitchen door, fold and slide them into the back pockets of my shorts, and we move out onto the pavement.

Bella shimmies over for her harness, and after lacing up my shoes, I collect her leash and a bamboo cane, the kind used by the police to keep order. She bolts through our gate and down the 200-meter paved lane, leaving me to walk alone between head-high walls overhung with shrubbery. A crystalline birdsong calls my attention to the air. It’s been decades since it last tasted like this, rolling down out of wild mountain places untrammeled by progress. The clouds, quicksilver cut with amber, insist, ‘Today! Today!’

I catch up with Bella, looking up into an empty fig tree, and snap on her leash. Whereas for two months of strict lockdown we’d been able to walk out in the main road, this morning motorcycles and the occasional car have reclaimed the space. We head towards the milk shop, sidestepping saplings recently bedded into gaps in the tiled walkway, and come to a long green tub haphazardly laid across our path. I reach into the chilled contents to pluck out taut, blue-and-white pint sacs, shaking each to assure its integrity before dropping it into my first bag.

Raju’s shop spills onto the sidewalk, its moveable metal shelves displaying piles of tomatoes, lettuce, eggplant, green pepper, broccoli. Bunches of bananas hang from strands of plastic twine and the inner shelves hold packaged bread, greasy donuts, bins of candies, cigarettes, and dry beans, while a tea kettle hisses on a gas burner. His wife Bhawani is out front sorting cauliflower and scallion. At the counter I hand Raju a 500-rupee bill and say, “I know you’ll change this, Raju. As for Bhawani, she’s pretty tight with her change; always makes me come back later with the exact amount.” This elicits the desired chortle of feigned protest from Bhawani and I leave my bag on a shelf to be picked up on return.

Around the corner, the barber Chot Lal (which means Shorty Red) sits on a wooden stool outside his shuttered shop scouting customers on the sky. He nods and smiles at me, perhaps noting my longer hair. Despite his being a ‘non-essential’ store under mandatory closure, our boys have made their backdoor visits to Chot and left generous tips. We’re still waiting to hear from Zach’s college in Philadelphia about their plans for his first semester, due to start in August. And we also pray about whether Benjamin will stay at KISC for his last two years of high school or change to the Kathmandu British School. Right now their futures seem more uncertain than Deirdre’s and mine.

Bella and I continue along the road past the Chaudhary Group complex, under a canopy of branches and watchful crows, across a pink patch of fallen Bougainvillea petals, two masked pedestrians and a motorcycle passing us on the far side. Bella dips her nose into every clump of greenery. “Come on, Hon. Let’s get the job done. We’re out for a walk, not a sniff.” I usually let her pooh on this debris-strewn back lane because there aren’t many houses. But when she squats resolutely in front of a development organization gate, I glance around to see if the guard is watching.

The smell of frying garlic, ginger, and bamboo shoots drifts from some unseen kitchen and we turn right beside the bust of a young singer, for whom this intersection is named. At the corner of its railed, marble enclave, overgrown by vines, sits a discarded bust depicting an older, bespectacled version of the singer. We turn onto a bigger road by the long-shuttered Top of the World Coffee shop and from this point on, Bella’s pace slows. About a month ago she was bit by a bigger dog, a restaurant bitch we call Knock Kneed because of her leg deformity and the reason I’m now carrying a stick. Deirdre was walking her that day and had only a poop scoop with which to ward off the attack.

We descend a half-flight of stairs to the Secret Bakery, which lies along a narrow alley marked only by aroma upon opening its creaky metal door. Laxman looks back over his shoulder from folding croissants on a tray and hollers out “Hey, big brother, Namaste!” “Namaste, Laxman. One brown.” I hand over one hundred rupees and he slides a warm loaf into my bag.

At the top of the stairs a woman of about thirty with disheveled hair and a dusty lungee-wrap steps forward, extends an outstretched hand and moans, “Srrrr.” While juggling the bread bag and Bella’s leash to keep her from sniffing the woman, I fish through my pocket, which draws two ten-year old barefoot boys to the scene. I don’t usually give to begging children, but I’ve lightened that policy during lockdown and I’m relieved to pull out appropriate denomination bills. I hope to do over the counter.

Up the army camp road we walk under eaves of razor wire and two lookout towers, and approaching the location where Bella was bitten, I have to redouble my coaxing. “Cmon. This is our girl’s road we’re on here. She knows her way around the block, she does. C’mon, now.” To which, her speed
ZIMMERMAN LETTER, Cont.

increases minimally, her snout pointed into the sidewalk.

I suppose the attack is still too fresh. Some say I should spare her this trauma, but I’d like her to get over it and I don’t want to cede canine territory we’ve held for years. Today Knock Kneed’s partner in crime, a dumpy white-and-black mutt lets out a street-long yowl at our sight and scuttles threateningly into the empty road towards us.

I let the memory of Bella’s wounds flash into anger. “Come a little closer and you’ll taste this,” I call out, brandishing my stick. White-and-Black seems to sense my readiness for a fight and skulks back to his gutter alongside a shop keeper who looks amused by the interchange. Knock Kneed doesn’t show up at all, and once past this point, Bella resumes pulling me along towards home.

Turning the last corner of our 2-kilometer block, we overtake the trundling figure of Shanta, Patan Hospital’s former housekeeping-in-charge. Even with a bum hip and aged seventy, she manages to ply this route to her daughter’s house, often laden with groceries. We exchange Namastes and she asks how things are at the hospital. Patan is designated a national COVID hospital and its central four-story sector has been boarded into separate corridors and wards entered only while wearing full PPE. Though we continuously quarantine ten or twenty PCR-positive people and isolate many suspects, so far we’ve only had two sick COVID patients. For this we’re grateful. Of Nepal’s first 8000-plus COVID positives, the vast majority are young men returned from work in India, 95% with no symptoms. It helps that less than 10% of Nepal’s population is over 65 years of age, a landmark I hope to cross this summer.

We return to Raju’s shop where, with a wry smile I can’t decipher, he hands me my milk bag. “Lot of cars out there this morning, Raju.” “Lockdown’s breaking, Doctor Sahib,” to which Bhawani adds, “whether the government likes it or not.” Back in our lane, I let Bella off the leash to gallop ahead and inspect the gutters for figs, her chewing gum. With all her gear stowed, we re-enter the still-quiet house, where I stash the milk in the fridge, the bread in its box, and get ready to go off to work.

(Painting by Elizabeth Bradshaw)

We pray you are all well. Love,

Mark, Deirdre, Zachary and Benjamin (& Bella)