

# GRACE NOTES

VOL. 30 No. 1

CHRISTMAS 2020/JANUARY 2021

## ADVENT IV - December 20

Trusting God: Angel Gabriel visits Joseph

Preacher: Amy McCullough      Scriptures: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 and Matthew 1:1, 18-25

A virtual **Gingerbread House Decorating Party** – 2-3:30 via Zoom  
*sign up online via Enotes or call the church office*



## CHRISTMAS CONCERT

4:00 p.m. - *Join us on Facebook or YouTube*

Featuring members of the Children's and Chancel Choirs  
organists David Brock and Chris Schroeder  
and selections from the 2020 Holiday Brass Concert  
recorded at Grace

## CHRISTMAS EVE - December 24



### Drive-By Nativity from 2 - 3 p.m.

Enter from N. Charles Street and exit onto Northern Parkway  
Holy Communion will be offered during the nativity scenes

*Also on Christmas Eve, the sanctuary will be **open for prayer** from 2-3:30. Chris will be playing at the organ and those entering will be directed into the sanctuary, decorated for Christmas for a contact-less/touch-less time of silent prayer. Please sign up for a time slot as we will limit entrance to 10 persons at a time.*

### 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Festival Worship

Please join us on Facebook and YouTube  
as we welcome the Christ Child  
in a prerecorded service



# CHRISTMAS I - December 27

Worship will be led by the Bishop and Cabinet of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in a pre-recorded service on YouTube at 10 a.m.

## Preaching for January Worship

January 3 - **Epiphany** - Pastor Dane Wood  
January 10 - **Baptism of the Lord** - Rev. Amy McCullough  
January 17 and 24 - Rev. Amy McCullough  
January 31 - Pastor Dane Wood



## ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORS FOR DECEMBER 2020 and JANUARY 2021

The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and . . .

- December 6** in honor of her husband Paul on his birthday by Janet Ander, and in loving memory of William O. White by his wife Mary and family
- December 13** in loving memory of George Getschel and Marian and Karl Mech, MD by Constance Mech and Laura and Buzz Getschel, and in honor of David and Annette Beachler's anniversary by Lynn Beachler
- December 20** in memory of her parents by Katie Buffington, and in honor of Margaret, Stephen and Kaleb Redmond by Kristin and Rex Turner
- December 24 & 27** in loving memory of Norma and Jack Danz, and in celebration of the birth of our Savior by Vicki and Al Saxon

**Urns:** The poinsettias in the urns are given in memory of Robert Raymond "Fraz" Frazier by Sue and Thom Rinker, and in memory of their parents Jean and John Strahan, MD by their daughters Dr. Susan Strahan, Dr. Nancy S. Blackstone and Sally Matthews.

**Organ Bays:** The poinsettias in the organ bays are given in memory of June and George Kahl, Jr. by their children June, George and Stuart

- January 3** in loving memory of John A. Franklin Jr. by his sister Dr. Doris Franklin, and in honor of the anniversary of Beth and Thurston Vargas by her parents Janet and Paul Ander
- January 10** in loving memory of his mother Adelaide W. Gough by her son Lee
- January 17** in loving memory of Marian J. and Carl F. Wallace by their daughter Susan
- January 24** in honor of those I miss sharing the peace with each Sunday by Kitty Allen
- January 31** \_\_\_\_\_

### FOR FEBRUARY 2021

Please contact Claire Greenhouse at 410-337-7407 with any additions or corrections

- February 7 Chris Schroeder (1 or 2) and \_\_\_\_\_
- February 14 Kathy Cosgrove (1 or 2) and \_\_\_\_\_
- February 21 Bonnie Caster and \_\_\_\_\_
- February 28 Jeaneen Wingate (1 or 2) and \_\_\_\_\_



## Advent I 2020

Isaiah 40:1-5 and Mark 1:1-8

November 29, 2020

Rev. Dr. Amy P. McCullough

Last week a series of persons worked here in the sanctuary to prepare us for Advent. Tim retrieved the Advent wreath out of storage and attached it to its wire. The beautiful wreath, hung from the ceiling as if brought down to us from God on high, was a gift to Grace Church from Bruce, in memory of his mother. Claire slipped in one morning, swapping out the green altar cloths for the blue ones. These paraments were also a gift, given in the late 1980's from two sisters, Kay and Marianne. They are no longer with us on earth and yet their gift lives on. This morning I placed our empty manger on the altar, a more recent tradition at Grace and one that typically occurs during the children's time on Advent's first Sunday. The bare manger becomes another visual reminder of the space we are to make inside ourselves for the Christ who is coming. It is a different Advent, I know, but the candles, the color, and the empty cradle endure . . . as does the faithfulness of God, whose promise of presence will not fade.

In this different season we are focusing each Sunday on a central figure within the Advent story. Four Sundays, four different characters, each who plays a pivotal role in making space for Christ. These familiar figures remind us that memory helps sustain us when the future feels uncertain. Advent wreath. Blue cloths. Empty manger. Light the candles. Lay the cloths. Hold the empty space. These truths upon which we stand have not changed. Nor has the voice that cries out to us from the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

John the baptizer, as Mark calls him, appears as wild as the wilderness from which he speaks. His clothes are woven of camel's hair. Locusts dipped in honey are on his fingertips. His hair is every which way. And his eyes can see beyond our carefully constructed appearances into our weary, sorrowful, seeking souls. John begins the good news of Jesus Christ. He is not the main event. Yet his voice forges the path we are to follow in order to arrive in Bethlehem. And in order to hear him clearly, we must turn our faces toward the wilderness from which he speaks.

John lived in the wilderness. He did not own a house in town or manage a store in the city center. One did not run into John at the grocery store, bump into him at the library or slide into the booth next to him at the neighborhood café. John made his bed on the rocky ground of a cave, tucked around a bend in the barren hillside, found only by those who had a map pointing the way. It was a good hike from the city gate. One had to put on hiking boots, carry a water canteen, and wear a hat providing good shade. John was found amid the shrubs, rocks, wind and sand. He dwelt in the wilderness.

Wilderness is not simply a material landscape. Wilderness is a state of the heart, a heart broken by loss, devastated by the cessation of everything normal, hardened by absence, numbed by trauma. God's people find themselves in the wilderness at critical moments: when they escape from Egypt, when they are forced out of Jerusalem by a conquering army, when they are pushed out beyond acceptability by Herod, or Pilate or any Roman ruler. To dwell in wilderness is to be on the edge of survival, in the thin place between before and after, between despair and hope, between death and life. Each option is possible. Neither ending is certain. This wilderness place is where Advent begins.

John cries from the wilderness AND the people leave the city to go out into the desert to listen more closely to his words. Who does this? Who inclines their ear to the one speaking on the margins and then searches in uncomfortable places for such a voice? Those who are desperate, who are frightened, empty and searching for more. Those who are sense in the reverberations a holiness, their own hearts hungry for God.

This year's Advent is an advent of wilderness, as we are exiled from cherished routines, numb to the months of living separated from family, community, or sanctuary, heart-broken that the waves of infections continue, aware in our bones that the toll of the year has accelerated all types of vulnerabilities. We, then, go out beyond the edge of the city,

past the spectacle of normalcy. We abandon the pretense of decorum and meet John in his rough clothes, harsh voice, crazy hair and knowing eyes, to hear about a path being laid for the coming Lord.

Prepare the way of the Lord, says John. Gather around the wreath, light the candles, dig through your decorations and find the creche. Let the manger be empty for a few weeks, so to deepen your hunger for the coming One. John's voice is a voice of hope. His hope is not mere optimism. The optimistic person says, "I get that the weather forecast reports a 90% chance of rain, but I'm going to plan for sunshine." Shallow optimism, asserts Peter Gomes, too often requires looking away from the horrors of the world. It asks us to continue in self-deceptions. Hope is different. It is an act of imagination and courage. It is, says Valerie Bridgeman, "based not on the belief that humans will get it right but in the trust that God will help us live into God's vision for all creation." Prophetic hope looks at the desolate scene and imagines the mountains being laid down, the valleys rising up and the rocky steps being made smooth. The entire cosmos rearranging itself so that the glory of God can be seen for thousands of miles across the horizon.



The voice of optimism tempts us to ignore the grim numbers, close our eyes to the brutality, look away from the emotional and economic impact of 2020. Just focus on staying cheerful. Soon everything will be all right. Hope looks directly into hospital hallways, the protests on the streets, the empty places at the tables and confesses, I do not know the way nor do I have the power to get there by myself, but I know God. I trust God, who is the way, has the power, and offers life. John the prophet exists on the edge. He sees in the hunger, need and terror and says God is . . . coming.

John wants us to be ready when God comes. For in addition to the wreath needing to be brought out, the cloths needing to be hung, and the manger awaiting its place, we have other work to do. The work is harder than finding a tree, hanging the lights, ordering the presents. It is the work of naming sin.

What do you think of when you hear the word sin?

An angry word, a temper lost, an estrangement of decades,  
A pile of money unlawfully accumulated, greed upon greed while others are hungry,  
A mountain of selfies, photos comprised solely of self-references, reflecting an ego out of control,  
An enormity of wildfires and hurricanes, signs of creation in peril,  
A knee upon a neck, a life ended, centuries of horror not yet accounted for?

Naming sin entails confessing how lost we are, how deeply we have erred, how defeated we really feel. Acknowledging all the sins that have accumulated forces a reckoning with the forces – internal and external – that have defeated our good intentions. Never has this work felt more urgent than it does right now.

John beckons us out into the wilderness to confess these sins. As we utter the words, tell the stories, the pathway forward gets clearer. Here in the wilderness we can feel the cold winds, notice the solitary shrubs and realize we have no path to trod except the one created by the painful yet beautiful truth of how much we need God. So make your confession. Let the space be cleared. As we do, the candles burn, the blue cloths beckon. In the weeks to come the manger will get a blanket as well as expectant parents hovering nearby. Bit by bit our hearts will stir, starting to make room. The Lord is coming.



## Four Hand, Two Piano Concert Kathryn Locke and Chris Schroeder, artists Friday, January 29, 2021

The concert will feature the beautiful Steinway piano in our sanctuary as well as the newly donated Steinway that currently resides in Fellowship Hall but will be moved to the sanctuary for this special program. Watch for details as to possible live-streaming with limited attendance and ways to enjoy it virtually.



**For Christmas 2020, these gifts were given in support of our Weekend Food Bags Ministry**

**BY**

Kitty Allen  
David C. Brock

Cathy Cosgrove  
Angus and Lydia Everton  
Jim Fitzgerald and Andy Trofatter  
Nancy Grasmick and Gil Streeks  
Claire and Walter Greenhouse  
Wendy Iglehart  
Catherine La Costa  
Priscilla Newton  
Marge Penhallegon  
Nancy and Alan Seitz  
Ron and Tanya Spedalere  
Ann Kaiser Stearns  
Nancy V. Strahan, MD  
Diane and Don Topper

Andy Trofatter and Jim Fitzgerald  
John C. Tydings, Jr.  
Marilyn B. Workman

**BY**

Kitty Allen  
Janet Ander  
Claire and Walter Greenhouse  
Kelly Jackson  
Kathie Metz  
Marge Penhallegon  
Susan Schumacher  
Glenn and Kittie Simmons  
Ann Kaiser Stearns  
Diane and Don Topper  
Andy Trofatter and Jim Fitzgerald

Rev. Nancy J. Webb

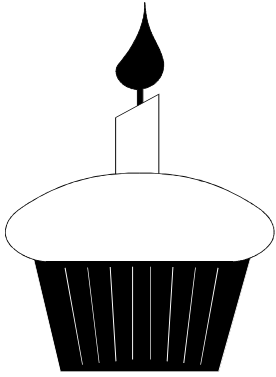
**IN MEMORY OF**

Loved Ones  
Mr. and Mrs. Rufus A. Brock, Mr. and Mrs. Grady Allison,  
Mr. and Mrs. Crawford Brock, Miss Margaret Allison,  
Mr. and Mrs. Hugh C. Bradford, Mr. Stanley Byrd, Miss Louise Rogers,  
Mrs. William H. Price, Jr., Mrs. Wilma Neil  
Patrick Michael Cosgrove, Ron and Alma Froede, Bob Kehring  
Our Parents  
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Fitzgerald  
Earl and Ruth Streeks  
Our Parents  
Nanny and Grandpop Simmons, Grandma and Grandpop Rambo  
John J. and Catherine F. O'Toole  
George and Verlean Newton  
Tom and Peg Paton  
Our Parents, John F. Strahan, MD, Edith Gordon  
Fred and Lora Spedalere, Laurence Buzi and Laurence Martin Buzi  
My dear friends, Jack and Norma Danz  
Jean and John Strahan  
W. P. Hicks, Gladys Hicks, Elton and Eva Beachler, Ruth Ann Beachler,  
Don and Mary Topper  
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth F. Trofatter, Sr.  
Mary Englar Tydings  
John M. Workman

**IN HONOR OF**

The Grace Staff, the Music Ministry  
My Grandchildren Weston and Lily  
Our Children and Grandchildren  
Grace's Clergy and Staff  
  
Avelynn, Emory, Esme, Everett  
Kitty Allen  
Betty Blount, Eva Simmons  
My Daughters and Granddaughter, Amanda, Ashley and Ava  
Lynn Beachler, Tom Hicks, David and Annette Beachler  
Chuck and Barb Starkey, Amanda Graham and Thomas Gaeng,  
Dr. George Kim, Bob Brandell, Greg Ruff, Lisa Greenhouse,  
David Brock and Jerry Neil, Kelly Jackson  
The entire Grace Staff





## Birthday Greetings

to those of our church family celebrating in January

- 1 Misako Fukushima, Kurt Hoffman
- 2 Kelly Topper
- 3 Mary Jane Demarest, Elaine Schaefer, Lyla Schmidt
- 4 Riley Schmidt, Arlie Shaw
- 5 Tom Gause, Ian Murray, Leigh Thomas
- 6 Abbey Murphy, Benjamin Murphy
- 8 Ben Holt, Maxwell Wiseman
- 9 Christopher A'Hern, Janet Ander, Cianna Ferrante
- 10 Nathan Arnold, James Scouten
- 11 Marianne Corry
- 12 Adrienne Hackley, Jacquelyn Meadors, Claire Stevens
- 15 Thomas Adolph, Wyatt Friar, Justin Hickey
- 16 Robyn McGowan, Matt Sinfield, Margaret Stuart, Kara Thorne
- 17 Bryan Howe, Samuel King, Milt Siglin
- 18 Edward Fields, Charles Starkey, John A. Tyler
- 19 Angus Everton
- 20 Michael A'Hern, Andrew Greenland
- 22 Carol Gamble, Cassandra Plitt
- 23 Jeane Santamaria, Trisha Wetzelberger
- 24 Carolyn Benfer, Eleanor Grasso
- 25 Wayne Schmidt, Alastair Valentine, Laird Wilhide
- 26 Tina Bathory, Barbara Daneker, Jeff Gamble, Mark Gruber-Lebowitz
- 27 Ken McCabe, Walter Stucki
- 28 Phillip Kessell
- 29 Lucas Calderon
- 30 Natalie Riddle, Alan Seitz, Matthew Strobel
- 31 Walter Hudson, Marilyn Workman



## Office hours

The church office will be closed from Friday, December 25 through Friday, January 1. The office will reopen Monday, January 4.

For pastoral needs during this time, please contact Rev. Amy McCullough, [[amy@graceunitedmethodist.org](mailto:amy@graceunitedmethodist.org)] who will be available as needed throughout the week.



## Stewardship Update

### GRACE 2021: FAITHFUL. GRATEFUL. BOLD.

Thank you to all those who have made a financial pledge for the 2021 Operating Budget. The stewardship team thanks you for your generosity and faithfulness. If you have not yet made a pledge, we invite you to prayerfully consider supporting the ministries of God through Grace Church with a financial commitment.

The stewardship brochure can be found on our website under the drop-down tab. A printed version of the brochure may be requested through the church office.

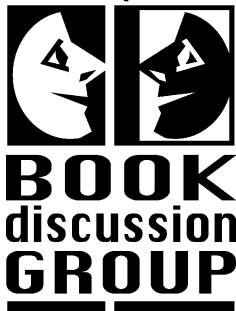
### A sacred summary

The simple shepherds  
heard the voice of an angel  
and found their Lamb;  
the wise men  
saw the light of a star  
and found their Wisdom.

—Fulton J. Sheen



## GRACE BOOK GROUP



For its virtual meeting on Monday, January 11th at 7:00 p.m., the Grace Book Group is reading and discussing *The Night Watchman* by Louise Erdrich.

New lovers of reading are always welcome. Contact Maureen Danz for the Zoom link ([maur.danz@verizon.net](mailto:maur.danz@verizon.net))

Grace Church is blessed with an abundance of leaders who give freely of their time and talents to shepherd the church's work. This fall the Lay Leadership and Nominations Committee asked all current committee members who would normally be concluding their service and rotating off to extend their terms of service for an additional six months, through June 2021. This request came as a measure to provide continuity in Grace's ministries amid the pandemic. Many current members were able to say "yes" to this request and the Lay Leadership team filled in all remaining slots. Thank you to all our current and incoming servant-leaders!

## Nominations for Lay Leadership 2020

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

### Church Council

Chair: Marie Yeh

Vice-Chairperson: Thomas Gaeng

Secretary: Lyn Phelps

Lay Leader: Jean Smith

Finance Chair: Jane Benson

SPRC Chair: Michelle Riddle

Trustee Chair: Linda Cameron

Missions and Outreach: Wayne Schmidt

Worship Chair: David Brock

Children's Ministry Rep: Amy Madsen

Reconciling Chair: George Kahl

Youth Representative: Kelly Topper

Lay Member to Annual Conference: Doug Schmidt

At large members: Mary Aikens Afful, Amanda Graham, Claire Greenhouse, Angeline Gullett, George Kim, Irene Moses, Karl Schillinger

### Staff-Parish Relations

2020 - ext 6/21

Michelle Riddle, chair

Chuck Starkey

Gordon Stetz

Lay Leader: Jean Smith

2021

Valerie Adams

Suzanne Stevens

David Haile

AC Rep: Doug Schmidt

2022

Elizabeth Shaner

Wendy Iglehart

Becky Farace

### Board of Trustees

2020 - ext 6/21

Scott Stevens

Linda Cameron, chair

Ed Caster

2021

Barbara Bond

Curtis Adams

Barbara Starkey

2022

Patrick Onley

Ashley Davidson

Francie Keenan

### Finance Committee

2020 - ext 6/21

Jane Benson, chair

Mike McGuire

2021

Sue Williams

Larry Griffith

Jim Heckman

2022

Burt English

Al Saxon

2023

Carl Armstrong

Priscilla Newton

Church Council chair and vice chair

Michelle Riddle, SPRC chair

### **Investment Advisory Board**

Michael Madsen	Gordon Stetz (chair)	Robert McIntire	Mike McGuire
Katherine Allen	Charles Starkey	David Beachler	<i>The Trustees</i>

### **Nominations and Lay Leadership**

Lay Leader: Jean Smith

2020 - ext 6/21

Lynne Sharpe

Wendy Iglehart

Carl Hickey

2021

Heather Grandsire

Glenn Simmons

Barbara Bond

2022

Amy Madsen

Andy Trofatter

Diane Topper

### **Children's Ministry Team**

Linda English

Michelle Riddle

Jody Wiseman

Wayne Schmidt

Biz Shaner

Amy Madsen

Kristen McGuire

### **Hospitality Committee**

Vicki Saxon, chair

Steve Danz

Katie Spearman

Diane Topper

Diana Gause

Matt Sinfield

Janet Ander

Sue Williams

### **Worship Committee**

Chair: David Brock

Claire Greenhouse (Altar Guild)

Amanda Graham

Burt English (Ushers)

Deborah English (Communion Stewards)

Barb Starkey (Chancel Choir)

Kevin Shaner

Jean Smith

### **Outreach and Mission Committee**

Chair: Wayne Schmidt

Lynn Beachler

Diane Topper

David Beachler

Wilma Starkey

Jean Smith

Kristen McGuire

Deborah English

Maureen Danz

Kelly Jackson

Barbara Bond

Doris Franklin

### **Reconciling Committee**

Chair: George Kahl

Kristen McGuire

Doris Franklin

Ellen Stokes

Andrew Trofatter

Patrick Onley

Ann Dahl

Barb Starkey

Andrew Trofatter

Chris Schroeder

Michelle Riddle

Doug Schmidt

Anne Griffith

Diane Lesman

### **Shepherding Committee**

Coordinator of Prayer Ministry: Janet Ander

Visitation: Jack Danz, Bill Stacey, Bonnie Caster



Grace United Methodist Church  
5407 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21210-2024

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Wishing all a Happy, Safe and  
Healthy New Year!

The Grace Church Clergy and Staff