

GRACE NOTES

VOL. 30 No. 2

FEBRUARY 2021



February Preaching and Worship

February 7	Rev. Dr. Amy P. McCullough	
February 14	Pastor Dane Wood	Transfiguration Sunday
February 21	Rev. Dr. Amy P. McCullough	Lent I
February 28	Pastor Dane Wood	Lent II



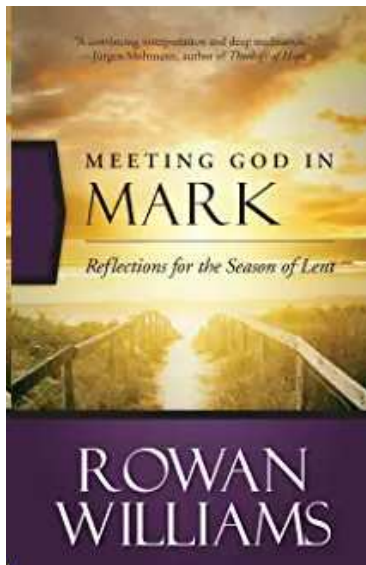
February 17

A simple service of prayer, music and reflection will be offered via Facebook and YouTube throughout the day. Drive-by ashes will be available between 7:00 - 8:00 a.m., 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 - 8:00 p.m

Pastoral remarks following the attack on the U.S. Capitol

Rev. Amy McCullough, in our worship on January 10, commented, “I wanted to acknowledge we gather for worship after what has been an extremely distressing week. In a pastoral letter sent to our congregation on Friday, I noted how the events at the U.S. Capitol naturally triggered multiple emotions: outrage, horror, shock, grief and fear. This morning we will pray for our country. My pastoral letter named two roles I believe the church has during a time of crisis. The first is to be a voice of moral clarity; to denounce acts of violence nurtured by hatred, to stand for truth-telling, and respect for our nation’s democratic purposes. As people of faith, we say such violence, hate, division and white supremacy are not the way of Jesus. A corresponding role is to act to bind up the wounds. We cannot ignore the relational, emotional, and spiritual brokenness that is exposed by and come with witnessing these events. These we also bring before God today, remembering in the season of Epiphany, our God is One who shines light into our darkness, reveals Jesus, whose grace is strong enough to see us through.”

The sermon she preached on this Sunday is found in this issue of *Grace Notes*.



Pastors' Lenten Study

Our Lenten Study will explore Mark's Gospel using the book *Meeting God in Mark: Reflections for the Season of Lent* by Rowan Williams.

Mark is the primary gospel for our current

lectionary year. Mark presents a vivid, compelling portrait of Jesus, who shocks the world and saves it.

The study will meet on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 p.m. from February 24 through March 17 via Zoom.

To register and request a book, please contact Rev. Amy directly.

Food for the Table and From the Table

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is the tradition of Grace United Methodist Church to celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of every month.

This time of pandemic has complicated this practice, forcing us to adapt and now serve the Lord's Feast outside on the first Sunday mornings after our online worship service. We will continue to do this. However, I want us to take this practice spiritually further.



"Communion," the word, has come to mean, in the church, the practice of sharing the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Christ giving his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins, but the word has more meaning than just that. "Communion" is the sharing and exchanging of thoughts, feelings, and oneself not only spiritually with God, but also physically with each other. This is a practice of sharing a meal and making not only community, but making family. We come to the Table, set by God Almighty, and eat, together as brothers and sisters. This practice is as much about giving ourselves to the table and community as it is about taking Christ away with us.

I am asking you to bring yourself to the table, and to do that . . . I'm asking you to bring food. The Grace UMC Scout Troops, 612b (boys) and 612g (girls) have hosted a number of food drives that benefit the GEDCO CARES Food Bank, which is the closest food pantry to our campus. The Scouts will now join us on the first Sunday of every month and continue to collect donations for this important ministry and mission.

It is my hope that we will share our table with the community, just as Christ shares himself with us. Come to the table, fill it for others, and take part in the Communion yourselves.

Blessings,

Pastor Dane Wood

(Questions about donations or interest in giving to this ministry may be directed to Pastor Dane via email (dane@graceunitedmethodist.org) or calling the church office.)

Save the NEW Date

The FOUR HAND, TWO PIANO CONCERT

featuring

Kathryn Locke and Chris Schroeder

has been postponed

from Friday, January 29th to

Friday, March 12th.

More details will follow closer to the concert date. Plans for a live-stream event are still in the works with the possibility of limited seating.





GRACE 2021: FAITHFUL. GRATEFUL. BOLD.

Thank you to all those who have submitted a 2021 pledge for Grace's Operating Budget. Your commitment and faithfulness are a blessing to our holy call of sharing God's love and mercy with one another and the wider community. As of the second week of January, we have received 74 pledges totaling \$279,848 in pledged dollars. This is a wonderful start, but more is needed to fully fund the ministries of God through Grace. If you

have not yet made a pledge, we ask you to prayerfully consider your financial giving to Grace and complete a pledge. Pledge cards can be found online at our website by clicking on Give and then "Stewardship 2021." A printed version of the stewardship materials may be requested from the church office. Questions can be directed to George Kahl, Financial Secretary, or either of Grace's pastors.

Kitty Allen
Janet Ander
Carl Armstrong and Justin Graves
Elaine Baruwa and Chiadi Onyike
Carolyn Benfer
Jane Benson
Nancy Blackstone
Francette Boling
Barbara Bond
David Brock
Katie Buffington
John Casey and Marie Yeh
Ed and Bonnie Caster
Bud and Susan Clark
Mimi Corry
Kathy Cosgrove
Ann Dahl
Jack and Maureen Danz
Bob and Ashley Davidson
Betty Dempster
Burt and Linda English
Angus and Lydia Everton
David and Becky Farace
Edward and Michelle Fields
Frank Fiske
Jim Fitzgerald
John Ford
Ed and Anna Mae Frederick
Marcia Gleckler
Lee Gough
Amanda Graham and Thomas Gaeng
Walter and Claire Greenhouse
Larry and Anne Griffith
Mark and Sheldon Gruber-Lebowitz
David Haile
James Heckman
Carl Hickey

Casey Humbyrd and Kent Grasso
Wendy Iglehart
Kelly Jackson
George Kahl
Cath LaCosta
Diane Lesman
Thomas Lynn
Michael and Amy Madsen
Amy and Chris McCullough
Kathie Metz
Irene Moses
Helen Mosher
Priscilla Newton
Patrick Onley
Steve and Kelly Painter
June Peterson
Tim and Lyn Phelps
Ryan and Michelle Riddle
Gregory Ruff
Al Saxon Jr. and Vicki Saxon
Bob and Elaine Schaefer
Chris Schroeder
Kevin and Biz Shaner
Butch and Lynne Sharpe
Eeva Simard
Jack and Jean Smith
Ron and Tanya Spedalere
Chuck and Barbara Starkey
Gordon and Joanie Stetz
Scott and Suzanne Stevens
Andrew Trofatter
Rex and Kristin Turner
Christine Von Klencke
Susan Wallace
Nancy Webb
Dane Wood and Megan Wood
Marilyn Workman

Baptism of the Lord

Genesis 1:1-5 and Mark 1:4-11

Sermon preached on January 10, 2020

Rev. Dr. Amy P. McCullough

In the midst of an overwhelming year, after another overwhelming, painful week, what shall we say? A favorite preacher of mine once asserted that Christians are never without resources in such times because even when we fear we don't have the right words, we always have central, sustaining actions. We can **do** something: pray, sing, eat, and today, wash. The sacraments are visible signs of God's unfailing grace. Here at the font we claim again the sacrament of baptism. We delve into the water.

Each year the church remembers Jesus's baptism. At the start of his public ministry, Jesus comes to the Jordan River, joining the crowds who have come in response to John's call to repentance, to offer himself to this cleansing ritual. When Jesus emerges out of the water the heavens open, the Spirit descends, and God's voice affirms his identity: the beloved Son of God.

We, the followers of Jesus, pattern ourselves after Jesus' act: submitting to the waters that promise to wash away our sins, clothe us in something new, unite us with Christ and the new community formed by his life, death and resurrection. Every time we celebrate a baptism, we recite these core affirmations. Then we conclude: all of this is God's gift, offered to us without price. Think about that. Here you receive life, identity, community, forgiveness, and newness, without price. So today, alongside our remembrance of Jesus' act, we are given the opportunity to reaffirm our own baptismal vows. In a week when the foundations shook, we return to life-giving waters to claim messages of faith that are ours to hold.



The first message of baptism is that you are God's creation. You, and every piece of creation, were made by God. This basic fact of your existence is spoken in the creation story. In the midst of a formless void, when the waters were swirling, God's Spirit entered in, making order, shining light, calling creation good.

Biblical scholars believe the Genesis account of creation was compiled during the exile. Then God's people reaffirmed what their faith taught them about the world, even as their present circumstances appeared to deny that truth. The earth, Genesis asserts, is not the end product of dueling gods or heavenly warfare, but is born of divine intention, an intention for beauty, order, and love.

God's method of creation is by naming. God says light, day, land, sea, creatures . . . and these elements of earthly goodness come into being. Naming something creates an inevitable relationship between the name- and the named, between creator and creature. We are created by God to be in relationship with God. Note the gentle strength with which God speaks, "Let there be light." God doesn't say "I command that light come." God speaks in a way that invites a response. Let there be light.

This is part of why naming is so important in baptism. The liturgy always includes the inquiry of a name. Who comes for baptism? What name is given? And the space to say "Today John, Mary, Helen, Charlie is presented

for holy baptism.” Naming affirms that your particular life, traits, and story are unceasingly related to God. Take a moment to say your name and affirm you are God’s creation, called into relationship with God.

A second, core element of baptism is the movement by which in this water we are both washed of sin and empowered by God’s Spirit to lead holy, transformed lives. These two pieces go together. John the Baptist focused on repentance, the naming of sin and seeking forgiveness. Even he knew, though, that more was needed, that even repented-of sin can reassert its power. More is provided through the Holy Spirit, the movement of God to infuse us with grace and power. Here is the breath of heaven that urges us forward, making us capable of more than we on our own can do.

The vows of baptism put these two acts together. First we are asked: Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sin? Then, do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression? A final question links the two together: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, putting your whole trust in his grace? Do you see the connection: turning away from sin, resisting its enduring power, and placing your life into saving work of Jesus?

Imagine an adult comes forward for baptism, carrying upon his body sins of the past, longing for them to be washed away, the slate cleaned of addictions, betrayals, failure to act. When the water is placed upon his head, its coolness does seem in fact to wash away all the grime, dust, scars. But life isn’t as simple as one moment. The opportunity to sin will be there again the next morning, the temptation to lurk back into destructive tendencies, damaging behaviors happening day after day. A mentor of mine says, I’ve come to realize that no matter how old I get, I am still a broken human being in need of God’s grace.

We also know that sin is not simply one individual’s actions. Sin is a web of failures, compulsions, hatreds, and choices that go against the goodness of creation, morphing into “spiritual forces of wickedness” beyond our ability to wrestle on our own. Here is greed, white supremacy, indifference to human suffering, systems that create tortured ways and the isms that deny too many their full humanity. Any and all of us are capable of being caught in this web.

What does the liturgy say happens in baptism after we answer these questions about wickedness, evil, sin and trusting Jesus’s saving grace? It says this water is a sign that God washes away your sin, clothes you in righteousness, and immerses you in Christ’s dying and rising so that we may be a new creation. In his death, Christ destroyed the power of sin. If we enter into that death, then sin’s power upon us is loosened and the way is open to follow Christ into a new creation.

There is one final message of baptism, a message I believe gets lost sometimes when we are caught up in the beautiful pieces of the liturgy. We focus on the feel of the water, the bright potential of the baby dressed in white, the thrill of saying a name and welcoming them into the community. All are good, beautiful pieces of baptism. But the words said here at the font should not be forgotten in the joy of a celebratory brunch afterwards. Real practices go along with this new life. These vows place real obligations upon us.

Preacher John Timmer shares a sermon titled “Owning Up to Baptism,” in which he notes that as we are made Christ’s by our baptisms, we are made equal before Christ.¹ Yet, he notes, we continue to live in a world of hierarchy, where some are granted more privileges than others. His sermon was addressed to those in a different denomination who argued against women’s ordination. But his point is infinitely transferrable to the new way of living expected of every baptized Christian. As he rightly suggests, if through baptism we move

¹ Timmer, John, “Owning Up to Baptism” in *A Chorus of Witnesses: Model Sermons for Today’s Preacher*, Thomas G. Long and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., eds (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 278-284.

through Christ's death and resurrection into something new, then we need to live up to these implications. We need to own the holy way of living baptism requires of us.



Friends, I know you can make connections between what has played out at the U.S. Capitol this week and that sentence. I want to speak a little closer to home, here at Grace and in Baltimore. This past summer, following George Floyd's death, Grace's Church Council began its work of fighting racism. One piece of our discussion was acknowledging that in the 150 years of Grace's life, we have our own complicit history in the racial wounds that plague our nation. It was a sobering conversation, also an honest one, that I believe is an act of entering into the water, dying to sin and being raised with Christ. In the past months, Grace has made steps to do the work of dismantling racism. That work must and will continue. Secondly Wednesday's *Washington Post* had an article about Baltimore's new mayor, Brandon Scott, and in discussing the challenges facing our newly elected official, it described our city's reality with these words: struggling public schools, state's highest poverty rate, more than 300 homicides in each of the past six years. My friends, this our community. These words represent God's children, which means they are our sisters and brothers.

In baptism we die to sin and rise with Christ. We are given power to resist evil and oppression in all their forms. We join a community of transformation, as the water sends us forth to serve. We have a responsibility to implement that newness. One of my goals for 2021 is to form intentional relationships with agents of change in our city, to learn from others invested in answering these urgent issues of education, poverty, joblessness and in a humble way, asking how this community of Christ can contribute meaningfully to the change. It is a journey of learning more about how we can join that web of mutuality that restores the goodness of God's creation.

What does our baptism mean? We are created by God and called into relationship. We drown with Christ in death, defeating the power of sin, and then emerge in his risen, new creation, to be a Spirit-led community of change. This water is for you. For us all. Remember your baptism and be thankful.

RECOGNITION OF BABIES BORN in 2020

On January 10, the Baptism of our Lord Sunday, on the altar were four bud vases with roses recognizing the birth of babies born into our Grace family during 2020 and one more in honor of those babies about to be born.

Katherine Eva Lenox – 1/30/20

Daughter of Karyn and Chris Lenox, sister of Andrew and Sera

Molly Alice Thomas – 6/15/20

Daughter of Kacey and Phil Thomas

Granddaughter of Kate and Steve Mullan

Great granddaughter of the late Jane and John Parks

Lilian Jane Zviman – 9/3/20

Daughter of Meghan and Scott Zviman

Granddaughter of Kate and Steve Mullan

Great granddaughter of the late Jane and John Parks

Javier James Puerto English – 12/7/20

Son of Courtney English-Doub and Javier Puerto

Great grandson of Debbie English





Happy Birthday!

Birthday greetings to those of the Grace family celebrating January 29 Jim Heckman

and in February

- 1 Grayson Gilbert, Patricia Volker
- 2 Emily Bruce, Brendan Millon, Caroline Grace Thomas, Marian Yanega
- 6 Sarah Atwood-Starkey
- 7 Morgan Scott
- 8 Bonnie Caster, Kelly Jackson
- 11 Kelly Painter
- 12 Jennifer Gillis-White, Constance Mech
- 14 Sue Stein
- 15 Valerie Pasquale
- 16 Alicia Metz
- 17 Laura Getschel
- 18 Carter Benson-Williams, Cole Benson-Williams, Elliott DeFilippis, Nicholas DeMetrick, Elinor Old, Steven Paylor
- 19 Allen Kessell
- 21 Eric Benfer, Jesse Siegel
- 23 Esi Yarney
- 24 John Honeycutt, Barbara Jackson
- 25 Bob Smith, Paige Stevens
- 26 Karl Schillinger
- 27 Molly Farrugia, Bob Volker
- 28 Curtis Adams, Alec Rowley, Robert Schaefer
- 29 Jody Wiseman

If your birthday is missing, please notify the church office so we can enter it into our database.

Special Gifts

These Christmas memorial gifts to the Weekend Food Bag program arrived too late for publication last month.

In memory of my grandparents, Norman W. Coates and Margery Jane Auten Coates by Amy Madsen

In memory of Landon W. Burbage, Jr. And in honor of Jean S. Burbage, 97 years young, by their son, Ross G. Burbage

BOOK CLUB SELECTION

February 8th via Zoom

Good Girls Lie by J. T. Ellison

Contact: Maureen Danz (maur.danz@verizon.net)

Downing Kay remembered and honored by UMNS

The United Methodist News Service honored Downing Kay in its list of 34 notable church members who died in 2020. The list included bishops and giants of the civil rights movement among other United Methodists.

Downing Kay

Downing Kay, believed to be the longest-lived native Marylander in the state's history, died May 15 at age 112. As the Baltimore Sun recounts, she also was a lifelong member of what is now The United Methodist Church.



Her memories included dancing to the Victrola, stretching a can of tuna for a week during the Great Depression and tending to her World War II victory garden.

In the last years of her life, the former schoolteacher lived in Towson's Pickersgill Retirement Community, where she delighted in playing Scrabble and taking Zumba classes.

Kay was a longtime member of Grace United Methodist Church in Baltimore, where she regularly attended worship until the last two years of her life.

"She had a real love of community, attended to people," said the Rev. Amy McCullough, the congregation's lead pastor. "She had a sparkling personality. She was someone who loved life, and you could tell that. She also loved God and loved the church."

BUILDING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

Book Discussion

January 26
February 2
February 16

7:00 p.m. via Zoom

Information & Sign-Up:
amy@graceunitedmethodist.org

HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

BY THE GLOBAL MINDFULNESS MOVEMENT

IBRAM X. KENDI



Grace Preschool was featured in **Baltimore Fishbowl** in December. As Director Tami James says, word of mouth is its biggest marketing tool

<https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/keeping-the-holiday-magic-alive-at-grace-preschool/>

Sandi Uelingher wrote the descriptive blog about Grace, a school that fortunately has been able to safely remain open during the pandemic, thanks to very diligent cleaning, testing and familial cooperation. The text was beautifully punctuated with photos taken at the school, with its happy children and their celebration of the various holidays celebrated in December.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS: The faces entering the building each day – the giggles, the wide-eyed wonderment and excitement for what each day will hold, the anticipation of finishing that last gift to share with family members, and the never ending enthusiasm for Festive Fridays have helped to (as they say) “Make the season bright...”

You’ll see bundled children playing outside with smiles warmer than the mittens on their hands. Even though it is getting cold, the students at Grace love their time outdoors with friends.

You’ll see students working to sharpen their skills in the most festive of ways. The boys and girls have loved learning about Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Hanukkah. Sharing traditions from home has been a highlight of the day for most of our students....

You’ll see that the spirit of giving is alive and well. Mittens, gloves and scarves were collected and will be donated to Share Baby in Baltimore... a reminder of what is really important this holiday season.

Grace Preschool is an educational treasure; tell your friends with preschool children about it.

LENT 2021



Grace United Methodist Church
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Baltimore, MD 21210-2024

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This issue mailed January 25
PLEASE RUSH

ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2021

The flowers are given to the Glory of God and . . .

- 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 memory of my mother Adelaide W. Gough by her son Lee, and in memory of my brother Emory L. Brown on his birthday by Bonnie Caster
- January 17 in 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 in honor of Chris Schroeder by Barbara Bond
- February 7 in memory of my mother Mary Jane Lawhead by her son Chris Schroeder
- February 14 in memory of Mary Anne Cosgrove on the anniversary of her birth by her daughter Kathy Cosgrove
- February 21 _____
- February 28 in memory of Elmer Wingate by his wife Jeaneen

FOR MARCH 2021

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

- March 7 Lee Gough (1 or 2) and _____
- March 14 Bonnie Caster (1) and _____
- March 21 Tom Lynn and Carolyn Benfer
- March 28 Palm Sunday Maureen Danz and Tom Gordon
Palms - Thom Rinker