

GRACE NOTES

VOL. 30 No. 7

JULY 2021

Dane bids us “Farewell”

Grace Church,

It is that time in the Methodist world and pastors are on the move. I am blessed and honored to have been appointed to Lansdowne UMC but am also sad to be leaving such a wonderful faith community. Megan and I came to Baltimore in 2018. She came in the Spring to begin a position at Johns Hopkins and I would come in July. Megan and I even came to worship that March, with no clue that I would be your pastor in a few months. We were excited to learn that I would serve here as your associate; we bought a house around the corner and moved in. Grace welcomed us quickly and carried us through one of the most difficult times of my life. Words cannot express the full depth of my gratitude for the care you gave me as I fought cancer.

Working here at Grace has been such a joy. I have loved sharing in the missions of the church from packing food bags with preschoolers and serving at Manna House to our trips to Harrisburg, PA and the mountains of West Virginia. I will miss the Sunday evenings with the youth of the church and the evenings of bible studies with the adults. I can't offer enough thanks to the staff and volunteers who make Grace run and make me look good when I miss things. It was a great honor to work beside you all. I also want to give my thanks and ongoing respect to Rev. Amy. She was a wonderful mentor, teacher, and leader, always offering a place for me to share my concerns and always with a good word of encouragement.

I know God will continue to bless Grace UMC and the ministries you do here. I encourage you to remain open to the movements of the Spirit and look for ways to do the new thing. Don't let the curse of satisfaction and complacency befall you. Dream big and do big. I expect to see and hear the fruits of your ministries in future Annual Conferences and look forward to hearing how you have grown in faith.

My blessings and thanks to you all.

Pastor Dane Wood

On the next page you will find the “Moving Policy” of the Baltimore-Washington Conference as it relates to Pastors’ transitioning appointments. I encourage everyone to read it and if you have questions, you should reach out to Rev. Amy.



Welcome, Pastor Levon Sutton

Pastor Levon Sutton joins Grace as the Associate Pastor of Discipleship and Missions on July 1, 2021. Rev. Sutton is coming to us after serving as the Lead Pastor for Emanuel United Methodist Church since July

2017. A Licensed Local Pastor in the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2017, he will be commissioned as a Provisional Elder at this year's Annual Conference. He has served previously as a member of the Discipleship Ministry and Mission team at Epworth United Methodist Chapel in Baltimore. He is a graduate of Kenyon College (B.A.) and Wesley Theological Seminary (M.Div.). He has a passion for music of all periods and genres and enjoys a variety of weekend activities. With his wife Adrienne (B.A. Penn State University), he is the proud parent of two daughters and is a dog dad to a standard poodle.

Rev. Levon's first Sunday at Grace will be July 4th. A reception for Rev. Levon and his family will be held following worship on Sunday, July 11.

July-August worship and preaching

July 4 - Rev. Amy McCullough

Communion Sunday. An outside communion service will be held at 11:30 a.m.

July 11 - Pastor Levon Sutton

8:15 a.m. Early Service resumes

10:00 a.m.

Reception for Pastor Sutton following worship

July 18 - Rev. Amy McCullough

July 25 - Pastor Levon Sutton

August 1 - Rev. Amy McCullough

August 8 - Rev. Amy McCullough

August 15 - Pastor Levon Sutton

August 22 - Pastor Levon Sutton

August 29 - Rev. Amy McCullough

“MOVING POLICY” for pastors transitioning appointments

¶4015. Returning to a Previous Appointment

As of the effective date of a new appointment, a pastor shall immediately cease all pastoral counseling and pastoral visitation with members or member families in the previous appointment. Since appointments are generally announced several weeks in advance, each pastor has adequate time in which to effect closure and make appropriate referral to another for the pastoral care of members.

Pastors shall have a clear understanding with former congregations that they will not return to officiate at baptisms, weddings and funerals, or do pastoral counseling or pastoral visitation in that parish. Pastors, active or retired, shall respectfully decline to participate in such duties when invited by members of a former congregation. Declining all such invitations is the responsibility of the previous pastor. The present pastor, at his or her discretion, may invite the previous pastor to return for pastoral functions. However, the present pastor should never be under any pressure to invite the previous pastor. This policy is ongoing and doesn't have an expiration date.

A few notes about worship

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

In person Sunday School will be held throughout the summer in Fellowship Hall during the 10:00 a.m. service. Children will begin in worship and be dismissed with prayer after the Passing of the Peace.

EARLY SERVICE:

The early service at Grace is resuming as of Sunday, July 11. The time has shifted to 8:15 a.m. and the service moved to the main sanctuary to allow for social distancing. Please join those attending this simple, peaceful service that includes the weekly celebration of Holy Communion.

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING:

Congregational singing is coming back to Grace! Singing in worship, especially with us Methodists, is such an important part of our worship experience and we have greatly missed it. To continue our safety protocols of being social distanced and masked, it will be necessary for us to sing with our masks on. First we begin by inviting the congregation to sing the final hymn. By singing only the final hymn, any in attendance who feel uncomfortable singing at this point will have the opportunity to exit the sanctuary as we begin to sing. We anticipate, as long as Baltimore continues its low infection rate, to expand our singing to all the hymns of our worship experience by the end of the summer. Come back to worship to sing, to hear God's message in scripture and to be in community with one another.

Join a conversation about the Facilities Renovation Plan

As presented at the May 19th congregational meeting, the Trustees are continuing their discernment about undertaking the administrative phase of the master facility plan. As these discernments continue, you are invited to come learn more about the plans and add your thoughts. Several opportunities for small group discussions are being offered this summer. You may sign up for one on the Constant Contact survey form or by calling the church office.

The survey link is:

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sv/sHJCiuo>

Sunday, July 18 at 11:15 a.m. (In person)

Tuesday, July 20 at 7:00 pm. (Virtual - Zoom link will be sent.)

Friday, July 23 at 10:00 a.m. (In person)

Tuesday, August 3 at 12:00 noon (Virtual)

Sunday, August 29 at 11:15 a.m. (In person)



Live concerts returning!

How exciting it will be when the *Music at Grace Concert Series* will again offer in-person live performances for the 2021-2022 season beginning with the much anticipated *Two Piano/Four Hand Piano Concert* presented by artists Kathryn Locke and Chris Schroeder. This new date is Friday, September 17 at 7:30 p.m. The program will include Edvard Grieg's *Romanze* and Johannes Brahms' *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*.

Our concert series will see the return of in-person concerts presented by The Handel Choir of Baltimore as well as Bach in Baltimore.

In October a rescheduled organ recital will feature Chris Schroeder's Indiana University Organ Professor, Dr. Marilyn Keiser. Please hold the date for this organ dedication recital – Friday, October 15th at 7:30 p.m. and plan to attend.

Be watching for a concert series brochure mailed in early September as well as additional information in Grace Notes and Enotes with more details about these events and many others. We look forward to welcoming you back to Grace Church for live music!

“The Halls are alive with the
sound of music. . .”

Grace is pleased to welcome Encore Creativity for Older Adults, a choral ensemble, as it begins weekly rehearsals in Fellowship Hall this September. Choral Arts of Baltimore, also, is returning this fall for weekly rehearsals. We are grateful both of these organizations for their contributions to the community's music scene and welcome their choral presence at Grace.

Report from the Congregational Meeting

A congregational meeting was held via Zoom on Wednesday May 19th. Grace's District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Wanda Duckett, led a portion of the meeting, which was held as Charge Conference. The first agenda item was a proposal from the Church Council, who recommended a new stream-lined committee for the Trustees and Finance Committees. The two committees will combine into one committee, called the Stewardship of Resources or an alternate title. The committee will be comprised of 9-12 persons, with the current Trustees and Finance members joining in ministry work together. Underneath the umbrella committee would be sub-committees, that would tackle specific projects such as stewardship, building maintenance, and the master facility plan. The new committee will adhere to all guidelines contained in the *Book of Discipline*.

This recommendation comes after months of discernment within both committees and discussion within the Church Council. The proposal arises from the ways Grace's unique income streams and budget structures have created the need for a high level of communication between the two committees. The new structure creates one body with a wholistic view of Grace's entire financial picture and operations able to work together toward long-term, comprehensive, and informed planning and enacting of Grace's mission to "act so that God's love is felt by all." Following discussion, the motion passed. The new Stewardship of Resources committee will begin its work in July.

The second agenda item was to receive the nominations for leadership within Grace's administrative committees for terms of service beginning July 1. Rev. Amy McCullough thanked the leaders who served an additional six months between January – June of 2021 due to the pandemic. A new slate of leaders was presented and affirmed. You will find those persons rotating off and those beginning their service listed below.

The third and final agenda item was to receive an update from the Trustees about the continued refinement of the Master Facility Plan. Scott Stevens, Grace Trustee, reviewed the original plan presented in October of 2019 and then shared that the Trustees have been working to refine the plans for the administrative phase of the renovation. This includes creating new administrative staff offices and a reception area near the entrance through the glass doors, creating a large gathering space flowing from the side entrance of the sanctuary in the current office space, relocating and expanding the restrooms currently outside the sanctuary into a more central place along the hallway. This presentation was for informational purposes only. The Trustees are continuing their discernment and will be inviting all community members to join in the discussion this summer.

Thanks to Kitty Allen, who acted as our secretary for the special congregational meeting and charge conference.

Thank you, Outgoing Leaders

We thank these servant-leaders who gave so generously of their time over the past three years during their work on a church committee. We are grateful for offering your time, talents, and service to the life of our church. These persons are ending their terms of service in June, 2021.

Staff – Parish Relations Committee:

Michelle Riddle, outgoing chair, Chuck Starkey and Gordon Stetz, outgoing members

Finance Committee:

Jane Benson, outgoing chair, Mike McGuire, outgoing member

Trustees:

Linda Cameron, outgoing chair, Scott Stevens, outgoing member

Nominations and Lay Leadership Committee:

Lynne Sharpe, Wendy Iglehart, Carl Hickey, outgoing members

And we thank those who are beginning or continuing their terms of services in July. We are grateful for the gifts they bring to the ongoing work of Grace. This slate of nominations was confirmed at the called congregational meeting and charge conference on May 19, 2021.

Nominations for Lay Leadership beginning July 1, 2021

CHURCH COUNCIL

| | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Chair: | Marie Yeh | | |
| Vice Chair | Thomas Gaeng | | |
| Secretary | Lyn Phelps | Reconciling Chair | George Kahl |
| Lay Leader | Jean Smith | Youth Rep | Kelly Topper |
| Trustee/Finance Chair | to be elected | AC Member | Doug Schmidt |
| SPRC Chair | Becky Farace | | |
| Mission/Outreach | Wayne Schmidt | Members at Large: | Irene Moses, Claire Greenhouse, |
| Worship Chair | David Brock | | Amanda Graham, George Kim, Mary Aikens-Afful, |
| Children's Ministry Rep | Amy Madsen | | Karl Schillinger, Angeline Gullett |

STAFF PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Valerie Adams | Elizabeth Shaner | Jim Fitzgerald |
| Suzanne Stevens | Wendy Iglehart | Glenn Simmons |
| David Haile | Becky Farace, chair | Lynne Sharpe |

NEW STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES COMMITTEE (SORC)

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Barbara Bond | Patrick Onley | Carl Armstrong |
| Barbara Starkey | Ashley Davidson | Priscilla Newton |
| Curtis Adams | Burt English | |
| Sue Williams | Al Saxon | |
| Larry Griffith | Francie Keenan | |
| Jim Heckman | | |

*This committee is a combination of Trustees and Finance into an umbrella committee. Three subcommittees would be formed: Facility Renovation, Stewardship, Building Maintenance.

NOMINATIONS AND LAY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE Lay Leader: Jean Smith

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Heather Grandsire | Amy Madsen | Claire Greenhouse |
| Glenn Simmons | Andy Trofatter | Kevin Shaner |
| Barbara Bond | Diane Topper | Chuck Starkey |



SPORTS WITH A PURPOSE

July 12-16 9 am to 3 pm for ages 6-12

cost: \$200 per child

A Christ-centered sports camp that uses sports as a means to teach life skills while also sharing the Gospel. Sports with a Purpose will utilize every opportunity for participants to practice the fundamentals of sports in a fun and challenging environment while encouraging sportsmanship. Daily Bible lessons and memory verses . .

. . foundational training in the primary skills of soccer and flag football. . . daily devotional session followed by instructional activities. . . daily social and recreational activities. . . safety a priority . . . monitored around the clock by camp staff and camp directors. Kids will have FUN, enjoy a sport, improve their ability to play, increase their knowledge of the game, develop more self-confidence and esteem, be more physically active.

Children should bring a packed lunch; a light snack will be provided in the mornings.

Team ABA is the #1 Behavior Analytic Sports, Health & Fitness training organization in the world.

TO REGISTER and for more information: graceunitedmethodist.org

Carolyn Young's email: Carolyn@graceunitedmethodist.org

THEATER CAMP

August 16 through August 20 9 am to 3 pm For ages 6 thru 14

cost: \$200 per child

The musical "FROZEN" comes to Grace! Children will enjoy learning the craft of live theater, staging, scenery, costuming, singing and dancing all week, ending with a dinner theater performance on that Friday evening! Children should bring a packed lunch and a light snack will be provided in the mornings.

TO REGISTER and for more information: graceunitedmethodist.org

Carolyn Young's email: Carolyn@graceunitedmethodist.org



The Grace Church family extends its congratulations to the following who have graduated this spring and wishes them well as they pursue further education and new careers. PROUD of you all!

COLLEGES

Abigail Marie Benfer, daughter of Robin and Eric Benfer, completed her studies at Howard Community College and will enter St. Mary's College of Maryland as a junior and an English major.

[granddaughter of Carolyn Benfer]

Caitlynn Hickey graduated from Notre Dame of Maryland University with a B.A. in Education. She will be going on for a master's degree in early childhood education at Notre Dame.

[granddaughter of Judy and Carl Hickey]

Robert Griffin ("Griff") Volker graduated from Towson University where he double majored in Geography and Environmental Planning and Metropolitan Studies.

[son of Robert Volker, grandson of Pat Volker]

Jackson Dahl Davis graduated summa cum laude from Muhlenberg College, majoring in physics with minors in mathematics and computer science. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. At the Honors Convocation he received two awards for almost \$5,000. Jackson will pursue a Ph.D. in physics at Johns Hopkins University.

[son of Elisabeth Davis, grandson of Ann Dahl]

Marin Srygley graduated with a Master's in Science of Speech-Language Pathology from Loyola College Maryland. Her thesis - "*Training Speech-Language Pathology Graduate Students in Anti-Racist Praxis*" earned the CAPCSD Plural Publishing Research Scholarship 2021 and the ASHA APARC Award 2020.

She has accepted a position with Phoenix Speech Therapy as a voice and fluency Clinical Fellow and looks forward to continuing to serve the Grace community.

HIGH SCHOOL AND BELOW

Charlotte Corinne Benfer, daughter of Robin and Eric Benfer, from Glenelg High School. She will begin studies at Towson University where she will be a member of its renowned dance team.

[granddaughter of Carolyn Benfer]

Kelly Topper graduated Towson High School where she was in the Spanish Honor Society, a violinist in the orchestra. She will enter CCBC this fall.

[daughter of Diane and Don Topper, granddaughter of Lynn Beachler]

Bodin Farace graduated McDonogh and is entering Elon University this fall to major in communications.

He ran on the cross country and track teams, played tennis and participated in several plays. He was voted by teachers and peers to be a Rollins-Luetkemeyer Leader for his senior year.

[son of Becky and Dave Farace]

Madelyn Grace Cherry is a graduate of Pittsfield High School with high honors. She will enter the University of Oregon in the fall

[granddaughter of Diane Cole]

Rachel Elisa Cherry graduated cum laude from McDonogh and will attend Boston University.

[granddaughter of Diane Cole]

Leah Catherine Benfer, daughter of Cheryl and Keith Benfer, will transition from middle school to Winters Mill High School, Westminster, MD

[granddaughter of Carolyn Benfer]

Jake Bissett graduated from the 8th grade at Calvert School and will begin 9th grade at Boy's Latin School this fall.

[son of Elizabeth Bissett, grandson of Sue and Thom Rinker]

Hope Greenhouse graduated from Crown Point Elementary School and will attend Mint Hill Middle School in Mint Hill, NC in the fall.

[granddaughter of Claire and Walter Greenhouse]

Weston Vargas graduated from Holy Cross Preschool and will be attending St. Peter's Lutheran Elementary School in the fall.

[son of Beth Vargas, grandson of Janet Ander]

Within the Family at Grace

BIRTH

Theodore James Van Lenten
son of Celia Landgren and Craig Van Lenten
grandson of Sara Nichols
May 13, 2021

BAPTISMS

Christopher James Lenox
Katherine Eva Lenox
Liliana Josephine Ward

NEW MEMBERS

Christopher James Lenox
Karyn C. Lenox
Matthew Douglas Ward
May 23, 2021

KELLY TOPPER

Senior acolyte extraordinaire



During this graduation season I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Kelly Topper on her graduation from Towson High. Kelly has served as our senior acolyte for several years and has been a role model for our younger acolytes.

Thank you, Kelly, for your years of loyal service!

Kelly is a true product of Grace Church. She is a 4th generation member! Kelly's great grandfather, W. P. Hicks, was the general contractor for the construction of our church 70 years ago and her great uncle Tom, a member of the church, also worked on the construction. Kelly's grandparents are the 2nd generation. Ruth Ann and Lynn Beachler met as choir members and have been faithful in their continual service and dedication to the many facets of Grace Church life. Prior to her death, Ruth Ann served as the Sunday School Superintendent and remained active in the UMW. Lynn still sings in the choir and is the church treasurer. The 3rd generation is Diane Topper and her brother Uncle Dave Beachler who has been a Sunday School teacher, youth fellowship leader, and a great supporter of the Scouts and the various children and youth programs, especially when various animals from his and his wife Annette's farm are needed for special programs.

But today we recognize the 4th generation at Grace. Kelly has grown up in our Sunday School program. She continues to participate in her Zoom class each Sunday and then joins with her family in the virtual church service. She serves on the Church Council as the youth representative, participates in the activities of the Youth Fellowship and in service projects. Because of her loyal attendance at church, she has not only served as an acolyte on her regular schedule which is generally the first Sunday of the month so she could assist with serving communion, and frequently as a substitute. We could refer to her as our "singing acolyte" because she would sing along with the congregation as she proudly carried the cross!

Kelly's other accomplishments and activities have included singing in the children and youth choirs and participating in our Variety Shows playing the violin. At Towson she was a member of the orchestra, the badminton team and the environmental club. Academically she was a member of the Spanish Honor Society.

Congratulations, Kelly! We at Grace are very proud to call you our own. Best wishes as you start your college life.

– Claire Greenhouse



Heartiest congratulations to those of our Grace Family celebrating birthdays in July.

- 1 Stuart Kahl, Philip Shaw
- 4 George Hocker, Jr., Janina Stetz, Bobby Yanega, III
- 5 Madi Casey
- 6 Ann Dahl, Andrew Pflaum
- 8 Cary Achuff, Catherine Buffington
- 9 Erin Eisler, Thomas O. Moore
- 11 Christopher Rinker
- 12 Caitlyn James, Mary Strobel
- 13 Michelle Riddle
- 14 Rowan Ferguson
- 15 Angie Chobanov
- 16 Kathleen Bossom, Garrett Charlton, Walter Greenhouse
- 18 Brian Kick, Al Saxon
- 20 Ann Martin
- 21 Justin Graves, Getty Greenman, Amanda Pfeffer
- 22 Abbey Sinfield, Don Topper
- 23 Alex Greenland, Tonya Sapre
- 24 Cristin Hickey, Jeff Sewell
- 25 Rory Ferguson, Kittie Simmons
- 26 Sara Hackley
- 27 Carol Polk, John Scott III
- 28 Chris Hayes, Tom Wellener
- 29 Nancy Cornbrooks, Jenai Paul, Sharon Schillinger, Kristin Simmons
- 30 Ross Burbage
- 31 Anna Sinfield

Move up Sunday

June 13, 2021

Congratulations to the following who moved up to the Youth Sunday School program:

Matthew Franklin
Breanna Gullett
Garrett McGuire
Lila Schmidt

GRACE BOOK CLUB

The selection for the July 12th meeting is

The Library Book by Susan Orlean.

For questions, contact Maureen Danz at
maur.danz@verizon.net.

Maintaining a connection and growing in faith during the pandemic isolation

by Kristin Turner

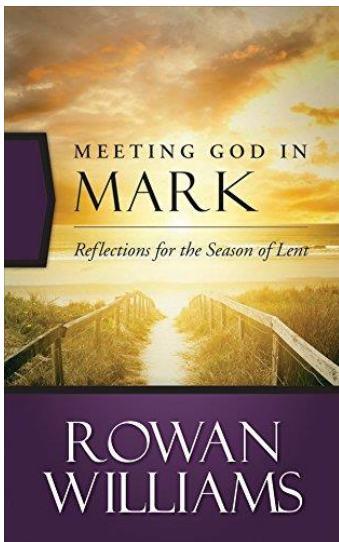
When we received the stay-at-home orders back in March of 2020, I was very concerned that church would be something we would sorely miss. When the quick response of online church services began, I was delighted and impressed with the consistent quality of each Sunday's broadcast. I have loved the music, the participation of various members of the congregation for scripture readings and such, and I have particularly enjoyed the thoughtful and inspiring sermons preached each week by Reverend Amy and Pastor Dane. I was amazed and enthusiastic about the various services we have seen. I know that a lot of work went into gathering and putting these videos together. I feel it was most impressive that we have had such a year of church without actually being in the church building.

Although we weren't able to meet together during those dark times, I still felt there was quite a lot of connection among the people. It reminds me of the hymn:

I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together.

All who follow Jesus all around the world – Yes, we are the church together!

I feel that in many ways we are participating together, even though we don't see each other in person. I enjoyed making masks for the congregation to use when they got back together, for local hospitals, and also the 50 masks I made and sent to the Navajo Nation when I learned of their desperate lack of protection materials. I loved baking bread for the shut-in members of our congregation. I was pleased to provide one of the Thanksgiving baskets the church gave to needy families, and now I'm happy to donate non-perishable food to the GEDCO food bank. All of these activities kept me cheerfully occupied in the work of the church during these unusual times. And I especially loved the Lenten study and found much to inspire me while reading and reflecting over Rowan Williams' book, *Meeting God in Mark*.



The message in Mark that can be derived from the stories, descriptions of events, and Jesus' words, I found somewhat obscure. It was difficult for me to understand what Mark was trying to convey without fairly in-depth study. Rowan Williams advises people to read and re-read the book to derive its central message. God is not what we often think – a distant presence, powerful, but mysterious. We cannot just pray for specific things and expect God to supply them, almost as if we were putting in an order online. It doesn't work that way. God wants a personal relationship that we may seek and which we find in ourselves as well. It may be difficult to do because of our old notions of the kind of relationship we thought was right. We have to change our minds about what God is and who we are. It's something that requires considerable effort on our part to make that new kind of connection and establish such a relationship. I'm trying to do this through meditation and contemplative prayer. It is difficult, but I am aware that it's a long process and requires strong dedication. Meanwhile, there are inspiring books to read which give more information and guidance.

Spring is a very appropriate time for Easter. It is a time of rebirth, awakening, and new life. The cold winter fades away into warmer, more sunny days. New growth begins to show on trees and plants. Flowers begin to open their petals. Soon there will be the showy beauty of new life and growth all around. It is also a season of renewal. Baby animals are born. Birds return from their winter habitat. People plant their gardens and begin to attend to their lawns and flower beds. It is a magical, joyful season. There is something special about each season and while I always enjoy each one, spring is my favorite because it has so many new and exciting possibilities.

It is not much of a stretch to say that this is the perfect season for the message Jesus brings to the world. He had been telling people of God's intentions for the world – that big changes are at hand, that the people are no longer bound by their sins, that God has the ultimate power. He signals that the change is imminent just as the world is awakening and renewing itself.

Then, Jesus tells his disciples of his impending arrest, torture and death! They can't handle this news. Peter contradicts him, the other disciples protest and are afraid. Nobody understands this at all. They wonder, how can this be? Jesus had done so many amazing things, he had such a large following! True, he had encountered trouble with the Pharisees and other religious leaders in the synagogues, but he had answered them all. He had made them look silly on some occasions. He was the Messiah, after all. How could he be going to die?

Jesus invited them to follow him to the ultimate ending of the story. He tells them they can be with him when he comes to his place in glory. So what do they do? They squabble over who should be in the favored positions close to him. James and John ask to sit on his right and left hand in glory. The other disciples are very upset with James and John, but they are all trying to establish their ranks in the heavenly place. Jesus warns them that isn't the way it works in the Kingdom of God. If they want to be first in

consequence, they must be servants to everyone. The first shall be last and the last shall be first. Again, they are taken aback and don't know what to make of this. It is so hard for them to understand. Although they have been with Jesus for three years, they still don't get it. It's a concept so far from their understanding that they just can't get their heads around it. They are so tied to their human world and so used to the way things are done in that society, how important it is to occupy a good position or to have some power to take their places in it that this new idea caused them considerable trouble and pain.

Of course, centuries later, modern humanity also had difficulty understanding that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. People still work hard, study diligently, pull strings, or whatever it takes to get themselves into an advantageous position. Our earthly power, the positions we hold, and the respect we command are very important to us. It is hard wired into all of our lives.

When I look at the modern idea of "getting ahead" and all it entails, I am amazed to think that people anywhere can get the idea of "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." But if I look around, I can see people who do understand and who act accordingly. They are certainly not the majority, but there are often stories from newspapers, television and life in the neighborhood that tell of people who are ready to help others, who go out of their way to do good things for others. We probably have even done something like this ourselves. It gives us an indication of what may be possible in this world.

However, a larger number of people are just the opposite of these. They do everything they can to get ahead of the rest. They make more money and work to gain more power and authority to make them the first in privilege and importance. If such behavior is so prevalent in our society, it's not hard to believe that it was also prevalent in Jesus' time. Even the disciples wanted to "get ahead" in their way. Since we are all human, it seems logical to realize that we all think of human things. But Jesus wanted his disciples to think of divine things. It is not surprising that they were slow to understand him. Even given their constant association with Jesus and his teaching, they could only begin to get an inkling of what he was talking about.

Jesus had a very busy and varied ministry healing people, performing miracles, teaching groups large and small, or individuals who came to him at times with specific questions. He often taught them in parables, which were intended to make them think about divine things, but which often merely puzzled his hearers. Even when he explained the parables to his disciples, they found these concepts confusing. Mark's gospel makes quite a point of secrecy about Jesus' activities. In his account, Jesus often tells those he has healed that they should not tell anyone about their miraculous recovery.

The difficulty in trying to be the servant rather than the one who wants to get ahead or the one who takes charge is what my dad used to call a "knotty problem." There are no quick answers because there is no simple solution that will apply in all places and at all times. Also, it goes against the way our society works in this world. If one's goal is to make a lot of money, get a promotion, or become a leader, one is actually diametrically opposed to the idea of being the last. And because we were raised in today's world, we would probably have some ideas and ambitions of our own about our position in it.

Jesus was in the unique position of being simultaneously divine *and* human. I imagine this must have posed difficulties for him from time to time. He probably had to think and pray about reconciling these points of view. I believe that in situations where he was thinking like a human, he probably shrank from some of the events he knew were inevitable until he could reconcile his doubts with his determination to do what must be done. No human person could help but empathize with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as he asked if he could avoid what was coming. And I'm sure any ordinary person could understand that someone who was suffering on the cross as Jesus did may have known moments when he felt abandoned and alone. But Jesus was also divine, so these moments were resolved and his singleness of purpose reestablished itself. It seems quite important for us to understand that Jesus didn't just assume human form. He truly felt what other humans felt. That was part of what made him so compassionate.

The conclusion of Rowan Williams' book leads us to ponder and contemplate Mark's gospel to derive its message. Mark does not spell it out. He does not embellish the story. It is for the reader to conclude what he is telling us. But the ultimate answer for why this was necessary is revealed in Jesus' words, "*this mortal man is now where God is.*" There is a definite difference between God's power and whatever power we may have. God's power is absolute. It is not manifested in worldly might, in ruling, but at the last, in the terrible, cruel, and humiliating death of a powerless human. His message is that there is nothing, no matter how drastic, that mankind can do to exceed God's power. And God emphasizes this point with Jesus' resurrection. The absolute worst was done to him, then he died, but he wasn't defeated! He rose again and was seated at the Father's side in Paradise. A mighty act indeed!

As we continue our journey back to normalcy, or something like it, in the latter part of this year, I am eager to see what new experiences we can have and what new truths and understandings we can gain. I look forward to it with great anticipation. Alleluia!



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Altar Flowers

Please contact Claire Greenhouse with any changes to flower orders - 410-337-7407

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

- July 4 in loving memory of my parents, Cy and Teddy Halada by Barb Starkey; and in celebration of the 4th of July by the Greenhouse, Sharpe and Benfer Families
- July 11 in loving memory of Lillie Hope Weber by her son Carl; and Irene Bear by her daughter Janet Ander
- July 18 in loving memory of Grace Pierpont by her daughter Christine P. von Klencke; and J. Douglas Corry by his wife Mimi.
- July 25 in loving memory of our parents , Thora and Leonard Schuchman and Echo and Fred Turner by Kristin and Rex Turner

Looking ahead to August. . .

- August 1 Tom Gordon (1 or 2) and _____
- August 8 Amy Pflaum and _____
- August 15 _____
- August 22 Streeks/Grasmick and Vickie Leshinski
- August 29 _____



Monday through Thursday
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Friday
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Through August 23rd