Prayer for the New Year

Thank you Lord for giving me
The brand new year ahead.
Help me to live the way I should
As each new day I tread.
Give me gentle wisdom
That I might help a friend;
Give me strength and courage
So a shoulder I might lend.
The year ahead is empty;
Help me fill it with good things.
Each new day filled with joy
And the happiness it brings.
Please give the leaders of our world
A courage born of peace
That they might lead us gently
And all the fighting cease.
Please give to all upon this earth
A heart that’s filled with love
A gentle happy way to live
With your blessings from above.

– Charlotte Anselmo

WORSHIP and PREACHING

Amid the latest wave of COVID infections, Grace Church continues to offer both in-person worship in the sanctuary at 8:15 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. as well as an online option through live-streaming of the 10:00 a.m. service. We have reinstated some of our practices from earlier in the pandemic, including distanced seating and pre-registration for worship. Face masks continue to be required whenever visiting the church. If you have any questions about worship or need a pastoral call, please reach out to Rev. Amy McCullough or Rev. Levon Sutton. We welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

February 6  Rev. Amy McCullough
February 13  Rev. Levon Sutton
February 20  Rev. Amy McCullough
February 27  Rev. Amy McCullough

March 2

Drive-by ashes and Holy Communion will be offered from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m., 12 noon - 1:00 p.m. and 6:00-7:00 p.m. on the front circular driveway. Worship will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.
Happy New Year from the Wonderful World of Grace’s Children’s Ministries!

We are enthusiastic about partnering with families to raise up a generation of children who seek to follow Christ. Our leaders are equipped with training and curriculum that helps them build a faith foundation for the children of Grace.

CHRISTMAS EVE 4:00 PM: With the love of God in their hearts and the excitement of Christmas, the 4:00 PM Family Service on Christmas Eve was truly inspirational. The budding young orators of the Children’s Ministry presented the Christmas Story with passion, grace and confidence. Everyone was welcomed by the words of Elly Wiseman. From the lighting of the Advent Wreath, the Christ Candle and prayer by the Stevens family, one by one, the unfolding of the magnificent story of that wondrous birth was told by Libby Madsen, James Adams, Addie McGuire and Garrett McGuire. Paige Stevens led the People’s Prayer and the Candle Lighting by Claire Stevens. Laced between each reading were seasonal hymns sung by Michael Brevard. All of this with a special treat by the Children’s Choir singing “We Three Kings” while also signing the words led by Elizabeth Shaner, accompanied by Michael and Minister of Music, Christopher Schroeder.

JOYFUL NOISE: A special SHOUT OUT and WELCOME to Michael Brevard, our new Tenor Soloist and Section Leader in the Chancel Choir, who has been providing music for our Children’s Ministry during Sunday School each week. You are awesome!

In light of rising COVID cases, we are continuing to host our children’s Sunday School classes online via Zoom to promote the health and safety of the community. Sunday School begins at 9:00 AM each Sunday taught by a dynamic team of committed volunteers.

February Focus: Jesus’ ministry and miraculous healings through faith; how Jesus’s ministry was filled with acts that gave people a sense of awe and wonder!

February Bible verse: All the people were beside themselves with wonder. Filled with awe, they glorified God, saying, “We’ve seen unimaginable things today.” Luke 5:26

February Faith Word: Wonder – to be curious and explore the mystery of God.

Weekly Lessons:
February 13 Lesson 11: Healing the Man with the Withered Hand – Luke 6:6-11
February 20 Lesson 12: A Servant is Healed – Luke 7:1-10

NURSERY is available 8:30 to 11:15 AM – We are staffed with teachers who love kids, even the youngest children in our church. When your children come to the nursery, they will be surrounded by music, engage in an age-appropriate Bible lesson, and playtime. Our welcoming staff is looking forward to surrounding children, 6 weeks to 2 years of age, with love. All health and safety protocols are strictly enforced.

GUMC Bedtime Story Time
Children’s Ministry presents a virtual children’s bedtime story every Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM. We need YOUR help! If you have a favorite bedtime story or children’s book to read, we would love to hear it. Please contact Carolyn Young, Director of Children’s Ministry to learn more – carolyn@graceunitedmethodist.org
Family Game Night

Calling all church members and families!

Grab your hot chocolate, bowl of popcorn, and join the Youth and Children’s Ministry for fun and fellowship. Beginning February 25, on the 4th Friday of every month, from 7:30 to 8:30 PM via Zoom – all ages welcome! Connect with God and each other while playing games! All game suggestions welcome. For monthly sign up and more information, contact Carolyn Young or Rev. Levon Sutton.

One Year in the Bible:
a Reading Plan for Families

The Children’s Ministry wants to get all families reading (and talking about) the Bible with a one-year plan that offers an overview of key events and people in God’s exceptional story.

We all want kids to develop a lifelong love for reading the Bible – and what better way than to make it a wonderful opportunity for families to spend time reading, talking and bonding! Together they will build skilled reading habits and learn to think more deeply about God’s word. If you are interested in getting a copy of the plan, contact Carolyn Young, Director of Children’s Ministry to learn more.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL - Advance notice

Theme: Food Truck Party
June 27 - July 1 for ages 3 to 12  Online registration begins March 1

Magnificent Youth Ministry

On Sunday, December 5 the opening hymn began and seven of our 16 youth processed down the aisle in their white cottsas and black cassocks! They were just a portion of our Acolytes, Crucifers and Torch Bearers. Oh, what a glorious sight to see these wonderful young people proudly serving in ministry to our church. Social distanced, they sat in the first two pews as Rev. McCullough and Rev. Sutton offered a prayer of consecration and the congregation warmly acknowledged them. In the weeks to come we will be blessed by their participation in the 10 AM service.

Our lead senior acolyte is Kelly Topper. Joining her are Cooper Davidson, Rowan Ferguson, Connor and Matthew Franklin, Luke and Suzanna McCullough, Addy and Garrett McGuire, Libby Madsen, Emily Riddle, Lyla Schmidt, Simone and Charlotte Sutton, and Max and Elly Wiseman. We give thanks to each of them for their ministry and to their parents for their encouragement and support.

Claire Greenhouse, Trainer consultant

Left to right: Charlotte Sutton, Elly Wiseman, Simone Sutton, Rowan Ferguson, Kelly Topper, Suzanna McCullough, Cooper Davidson
The novel, *The Wonder Worker*, opens with the character Alice, a woman in her late twenties beset with rising crises in her life.\(^1\) As an infant her mother left her to be raised by an older aunt, who is now bedridden from a series of strokes. Alice had hoped to work as a chef, but providing care for her aunt has become a full-time occupation, while worrying about how to manage the household and pay the bills has heightened her anxiety. Alice has lived her life with a pervasive sense of failure, sensitive to her mother’s absence, judging herself not smart enough to enter a university, struggling with an eating disorder she’s trying to hide. Now she is frightened by her approaching aloneness when her aunt dies, an inevitability that is coming closer by the day.

Unexpectedly, a priest crosses her path, who offers to visit as a show of support. On what becomes her aunt’s final day of life, his prayer for their mutual healing prompts a miracle of sorts. After weeks of languishing with the ability to communicate, her aunt rouses. She struggles to speak, first uttering a single word: *Forgive*. Alice, listening at the bedside, misinterprets her aunt’s message. “You are telling me that you forgive me for being such a burden, for not being a good student, for being such a disappointment,” she says. Her aunt becomes agitated, insistent on trying to speak again, *Dear Alice*, she says, *Forgive me. What a blessing you have been.* It is a message opposite of Alice’s deepest fears: What a blessing you have been.

This scene conveys one core message about baptism. So often across Christian history, we have approached baptism as a requirement for heaven, an act whose efficacy is to wash away our sins. The gospel stories of Jesus’s baptism typically begin with John’s passionate plea for repentance, which heightens that emphasis. But baptism, first and foremost, is about God’s acceptance, God’s delight in humankind. Like the dying aunt’s words to Alice, God says, “beloved child, you are a blessing. I delight in you, a gift to the world.” At the heart of God is not condemnation, but embrace, not rejection but acceptance. Baptism is an acknowledgment of God’s actions to call us by name, using a voice filled with love.

So as we celebrate Jesus’s baptism and remember our own, this message of acceptance is the first thing I want to convey about baptism. God says to Jesus, “You are my Son, the Beloved.” At every baptism we confirm such chosen-ness of the person at the font. The water is a sign of this approval, for God has worked through water since the first stirrings of creature. Water is a life source, a mode of refreshment, and a symbol of how God’s love flows through our lives. As P.C. Ennis says, “At our deepest level we want to be noticed, we want to count, we want to know even when we mess up that we are still loved. The moment of baptism is that unique occasion when the human yearning for approval is ultimately satisfied.”\(^2\) You are beloved by God who knows your name and says you are mine.

Another story, taken from the recent headlines, helps convey a second message about baptism. It is not a joyous story of divine approval but a heart-breaking one of human pain, sin, and death. In late November a teenager shot into the hallways of his school. Another school shooting, four more precious lives lost. Later

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news outlets would report on his recent drawings, depicting violence with the words “help me” written alongside the images. That plea has haunted me since that tragic day. A kid in agony about to attack others, whose cries for help were neither heard nor responded to. What in the world could this story have to do with baptism? Isn’t it the antithesis of what we just claimed about God’s claiming of us as beloved?

Baptism is not only about approval and certainly it is not about empty approval, cheery sentiments that ignore the world’s pain, our destructive actions, or real battles with the demonic dimensions of the cosmos. Ennis also says, “if there is no judgment, there is not grace . . . if there is nothing to disapprove, then there can be no approval.” For baptism to mean something, it must also speak into such death, pain, and destruction. To hear this counterpoint, let’s think against about water. Alongside God’s movement over the waters found in scripture there are other instances where the seas swirl in chaos, threatening to destroy life. The waters that bless can also kill. In these moments, God does not shrink away from the chaos, but moves powerfully to tame it. This power of God to confront evil, to bring order, to move persons from death to life is at work in baptism.

In the baptism liturgy we ask those who come to the font, do you reject the evil powers of this world? And then we name that being washed in the waters is akin to moving with Jesus through death into life. One seminary professor was known to ask his students to consider how much water is needed for baptism? His answer: enough to drown in. The call to beloved-ness includes an honest acknowledge of the powers of death. Death and life, chaos and goodness of God’s order are all acknowledged at the font. To be baptized is to call upon the power of God’s rescue to flow into every facet of our lives. Here we die with Christ; here we rise with him, too. Baptism aids us in choosing love over hate, peace over violence, forgiveness over festering hurt.

Tradition tells us that Martin Luther, the great reformer, was known to remind himself often of his baptism. In times of trouble or temptation, he would touch his forehead and say, remember Martin, you have been baptized. This gesture called upon the power of God to resist evil, to turn away from temptation, to meet the deadly forces of our world with power for life. So baptism conveys God’s delight in you as God’s child and baptism begats the Spirit’s power upon you to choose the holy way.

For a third, final word about baptism, I invite us to imagine Jesus’s own ruminations on the night before his death. It has been three years since he came up from being submerged in the Jordan River, to hear the heavenly voice claiming his identity. Three years since the commission was given along with the call: to preach good news, to free captives, feed the hungry, heal the sick and usher in God’s kingdom. The living out of his vocation brought him into danger. Now he is alone in the garden, praying while the disciples slumber, facing his own crucifying death.

Did he think back to his baptism? Remember the affirmation, all the promise that was contained in that moment? How did being called beloved sound to him now, on the night before his death? Did he feel betrayed by the promise of purposeful work? Forsaken by God who had been well-pleased with him? Did being baptized feel useless, like a nice but ineffective ritual that didn’t actually do much?

Baptism, says the classic Christian teaching, is a visible sign of an invisible grace. It is an outward symbol of how God’s allegiance to us continually invades our lives. Whenever we acknowledge what God has done, the space within us where God moves widens. Jesus could hold onto the moment of rising out of the water, remember the assurance, I am with you. Jesus could cling to the truth that the Spirit descended upon as he prayed and has not left. Here is a promise that his life, his labor, his love was held in the God’s work, that he did not need to fear the future, for his vocation held a mighty role in God’s redemptive purposes.

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3 Ibid.
The Handel Choir of Baltimore

The Handel Choir of Baltimore returns to Grace Church’s sanctuary on Saturday, March 5th at 7:30 p.m. for its *Made in Baltimore* concert featuring contemporary pieces by Baltimore composers, including a world premiere of *Houses of Peace* and repertoire by faculty at Peabody, UMBC and Morgan State University. This concert also includes a piece entitled *The Bells* by Sergei Rachmaninoff, transcribed for 4-hand organ by Brian Bartoldus to be played by Tom Hetrick and Christopher Schroeder. Ticket information can be found at handelchoir.org.

Marilyn Keiser, Organist, in recital

On Friday, March 18 at 7:30 p.m., Grace Church, in collaboration with the Baltimore Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, will welcome Dr. Marilyn Keiser, Professor Emerita from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN when she will present an organ recital on Grace’s newly refurbished pipe organ. Dr. Keiser taught organ and church music courses to our Minister of Music, Chris Schroeder, during the five years he attended IU to complete his undergraduate and master’s degrees in Organ Performance and Church Music. This recital is free and open to the public. All are welcome.

Bach Marathon

Watch for more detailed information about the Bach Marathon Concert at St. David’s Episcopal Church on Sunday, March 20th. Our Minister of Music and Organist, Chris Schroeder, has been invited to play a 20-minute segment; watch Enotes closer to the date to learn his exact playing time.

Support of Music at Grace Concert Series

Be watching your USPS mail for a letter from Chris Schroeder inviting your financial support of the Music at Grace Concert Series. As we continue to learn to live with this pandemic, we have increased our in-person concerts this year and have need for funding support. We have not asked for assistance for the last two years. Your generosity and support of the Concert Series will be so very much appreciated!

THANK YOU, GRACE MUSICIANS

Continuing appreciation to our Chancel Choir members and our soloists who have remained flexible with our schedule and workload as we take each week one week at a time, during this challenging segment of the pandemic. The contributions you make to our worship services are such blessings. Thank you!

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SERMON, cont.

The same truth is available to us. In the waters of baptism God calls you God’s own child and commissions you to holy work. With the Spirit’s power upon you, you can labor through the commitments of your life in a way that speaks of God’s faithfulness. As you do, you join a mighty stream of redeeming grace that ever flows through our world. If you find yourself in your own desolate garden, think back to your baptism, find a way to touch the water, place its drops again on your head, and hear anew, “I have called you by name. You are mine.”
GRACE 2022: Now more than ever

Thank you for your faithfulness! Giving at Grace Church remained strong in 2021 because of your generosity and commitment. The following persons have made a pledge for 2022. It is never too late to submit a pledge for the year. For more information about our ministry plans for this year, see graceunitedmethodist.org/give/stewardship-2022/. If you would like to make a pledge, please contact George Kahl, Financial Secretary in the church office.

Mary & Joseph Aikins-Afful
Kitty Allen
Janet Ander
Patsy Andrews
Carolyn Benfer
Jane Benson & John Grzybowski
Nancy Blackstone
Frannce Boling
Barbara Bond
David Brock
Katie Buffington
Linda & Dennis Cameron
John Casey & Marie Yeh
Ed & Bonnie Caster
Bud & Susan Clark
Mimi Corry
Kathy Cosgrove
Ann Dahl
Jack & Maureen Danz
Bob & Ashley Davidson
James Doub
Bruce Eicher
Burt & Linda English
Deborah English
Todd English
Angus & Lydia Everton
Becca Ewing
David & Becky Farace
Edward & Michelle Fields
Frank Fiske
Jim Fitzgerald
John Ford
Thomas Franklin
Danell Gill
John & Judy Gillan
Marcia Gleckler
Lee Gough
Amanda Graham & Thomas Gaeng
Heather & Jim Grandsire
Walter & Claire Greenhouse
Mark & Sheldon Gruber-Lebowitz
David Haile
James Heckman
Carl Hickey
Kelly Jackson
George Kahl
John & Francie Keenan
Brian & Sandy Kick
Cath & John LaCosta
Chris & Karyn Lenox
Michael & Amy Madsen
Amy & Chris McCullough
Beth Mentusky
Kathie Metz
Thomas Moore
Priscilla Newton
Patrick Onley
Marc & Elizabeth Ottinger
Steve & Kelly Painter
June Peterson
Tim and Lyn Phelps
Ryan & Michelle Riddle
Tanya Sapre
Al & Vicki Saxon
Bob & Elaine Schaefer
Doug and Allegra Schmidt
Kevin & Biz Shaner
Butch & Lynne Sharpe
Dorothy Shindle
Louis Simard
Chuck & Barbara Starkey
Gordon & Joanie Stetz
Scott & Suzanne Stevens
Walter & Hyesun Stuart
Levon & Adrienne Sutton
Andrew Trofatter
Rex & Kristin Turner
Pat Volker
Christine Von Klencke
Susan Wallace
Nancy Webb
Tom & Lois Wellener
Marilyn Workman
Anonymous (2)

Thank you to outgoing Church Leaders

As the calendar turns to a new year, we give thanks for the following persons who completed a term of service within one of Grace’s committees that provide vision and oversight for our church’s life. Thank you for your time, thoughtfulness, efforts and dedication.

Church Council: Marie Yeh (outgoing chair), Thomas Gaeng (outgoing vice chair), Irene Moses (member at large)
Staff Parish Relations Committee: Valerie Adams, Suzanne Stevens, David Haile
Stewardship of Resources Committee (formerly Trustees and Finance): Barbara Bond, Curtis Adams, Barbara Starkey, Sue Williams, Larry Griffith, Jim Heckman
Lay Leadership and Nominations Committee: Heather Grandsire, Glenn Simmons, Barbara Bond

In last month’s Grace Notes we printed a list of committees whose terms of service either continued or began in 2022 and invite your prayers for them.
Happy Birthday!

Birthday greetings to those of the Grace family celebrating in February
1 Patricia Volker
2 Brendan Millon, Caroline 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, Robert Schaefer
29 Jody Wiseman

Special Gifts
We acknowledge with gratitude the following special gifts:

In memory of Lois Klein by Janet Ander

To the Music Fund
in memory of John Workman by Marilyn Workman

To the Endowment Fund
from the Estate of Betty and John Dempster

Christmas Memorial for Mission-Outreach by Amy Madsen
in memory of her grandparents,
Norman and Marjorie Coates

GRACE BOOK CLUB

February 14th is the date of the next meeting of the Grace Book Club at 12:30 p.m. in the church parlor.
The book for this month is The Book of Two Ways by Jodi Picoult.
You are invited to join the group, wearing a mask, of course. For more information please contact Maureen Danz, maur.danz@verizon.net.

TWO WOLVES - A Cherokee Parable

An old Cherokee chief was teaching his grandson about life....

“A fight is going on inside me,” he said to the boy. “It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, self-doubt and ego. The other is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

“This same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person, too.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf will win?”
The old chief simply replied, “The one you feed.”
– Jack Danz, CLM
ALTAR FLOWERS

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

February 6  in memory of Mary Jane Lawhead by her son Chris Schroeder
February 13 in memory of Mary Ann Cosgrove on her birthday by her daughter Kathy Cosgrove
February 20 in memory of Bonnie Smith on her birthday by her daughter Lynn Reichelm and grandsons Rob and Scott
February 27 in memory of Elmer Wingate by his wife Jeaneen

LOOKING AHEAD TO MARCH 2022

March 6  Lee Gough (1) and .......
March 13  Greenhouse (1) and .......
March 20  Tom Lynn and Carolyn Benfer
March 27  Tom Gordon and .........

Additional donors are needed for March. Please contact Claire Greenhouse at 410-337-7404 or email her at aschoolrn@verizon.net. Flowers are $27.00 per vase.

EASTER PASchal/CHRIST CANDLE. This candle costs approximately $100 and carries Christ’s light throughout the year. Would you be interested in donating it? If so, please contact Claire Greenhouse.