

Grace Notes

The Rev'd Geoffrey Howson

Grace Episcopal Church, Kingston

January, February 2008



Mark Your Calendars

January 20
Breakfast 9am

February 6
Ash Wednesday
Eucharist with Ashes
6:00pm

February 10
Annual Meeting
Breakfast 9am

Coffee Hours Hosts and Hostesses are Needed!

We all enjoy fellowship and coffee hour after church on Sunday morning. Please volunteer and sign up to host!!!

A sign-up sheet is available in the Wallis room.

Take a minute and sign up!



Coffee and drinks are provided, all you need bring is food to share and set up. Instructions are available.

Committee Reports

Annual committee reports are due to the church office no later than **January 26th**. If you would like a copy of last years report for reference, please contact Nancy in the church office. Reports include a summary what your committee has done over the past year and a all financial transactions.

Dear friends,

Because some of you may not be able to attend the annual meeting (held between the two services on February 10), I want to take this opportunity to share with you my "State of Grace" report. My memory of the "State of the Union" addresses I've heard is that the next sentence is supposed to be, "My friends, I am happy to report that Grace is strong!", at which point, you are all supposed to applaud. (Please feel free to do so in the privacy of your living rooms, or wherever you are reading this.)

The reality is that Grace is strong! It is strong because it is living out its mission "to love one another" in ways established and in ways new. We continue to be a place where community groups can gather. We continue to be a place of peace and worship where all are welcome. We continue to be a place that reaches out to one another, to the community, to the Church, and to the wider world with financial and prayerful support. We continue to be a place that wants to bear witness to God's love in difficult times, and to that end (and directly due to our Church School's leadership), we are investigating the possibility of being hosts to the community's homeless population for two weeks out of the year. Our confirmation class is exploring ways of reaching out to the children in the University Misericordia's Women with Children Program, the program that was also the recipient of our Advent giving cards, our Lenten cards, and some of the proceeds of our Spaghetti Dinner. There are stories I hear from Grace parishioners of knowing people who have been personally touched by our outreach, and I know the Spirit is strong at Grace.

Our fellowship efforts have been joyous to behold this past year, and I have been thrilled to have a group of parishioners take on the challenge of finding ways to mix fund-raising with fun-raising. In addition to our monthly Sunday breakfasts which provide an opportunity for us to mingle with sisters and brothers from the other service and to invite friends and family to join us for a marvelous repast, we have enjoyed simple suppers and pot lucks and cook outs and a day at Knoebbel's and the first Spaghetti Dinner of what we hope will become a tradition at Grace. (Please note the next one is planned for February 6 – mark your calendars!) People are working hard behind the scenes and in

conjunction with two other local parishes to plan a street fair this autumn, and it's exciting to have opportunities to spread the word that great things are happening here. Our commitment to fellowship is growing, and I know the Spirit is strong at Grace.

The Stewardship Committee was called to undertake a new program this year that reminded us that giving is about having a healthy and loving relationship with our life-giving and life-sustaining God and not simply some obligation we perform with reluctance. If it had done nothing more than give us a new way to look at how and why we give it would have been a great success, but, in fact, it was a success in encouraging more people to complete pledge cards which in turn allows for a thoughtful budget to be developed for the coming year. We were fortunate to receive a grant from the Diocese to aid us in our stewardship efforts, but the Diocese has also asked us to look at ways that we can reverse the trend of recent years of dipping more and more into our endowment, and I think this needs to be another priority for us in 2008. Ideally we would be able to "grow" our pledges to the national average of \$1,700 per household which would then free us to increase our outreach and fellowship efforts. Again, there are parishioners who are taking leadership in the area of stewardship, and they, too, are proof that the Spirit is strong at Grace.

We have a Church School that has injected new life and enthusiasm into our midst, and I am grateful to the dedicated group of parents and their equally dedicated children for all of the gifts they have provided us. If you ever have any doubt about the strength of the Spirit at Grace, please make plans to attend a 10:00 service where the children have composed the prayers of the people and provide much of the musical offerings. You'll see what I'm talking about. One area I would love to elicit ideas from the congregation is that of adult Christian education. We have tried many different formats, many different times, and I have yet to hit upon a program that appeals to people enough to prompt regular attendance. Perhaps if I could find something with a Steelers theme...? I'll start looking!

In ending this brief overview of where we've been and where the road may be leading us, I want to thank, of course, Nancy Pleskach for all of her patient efforts on behalf of all of us here at Grace; Joanne Herron for her unflagging devotion to providing beautiful music on Sunday mornings; and to Bob Dickson (and his volunteer assistant, Ted Merce) for all the work that goes into maintaining the plant and make it hospitable to congregants and outsiders alike. I also want to thank those members of Vestry who are ending their terms – Darren Ryan, Cynthia Johnson, Robin Yedlock – for their diligence, their devotion, and their willingness to be a part of the leadership at Grace. Finally, my personal and heartfelt thanks to my departing wardens, Rusty Flack and Ed Macosky. They have been wise counsels, providers of jokes and witticisms, and earnest leaders. I will miss them.

And to all of you, my thanks for being people of faith, people of courage and daring, people who don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk. I have been blessed by my four and a half years of walking with you, and look forward to our continuing journey.

Blessings, Geoff

Souper Sunday

Super bowl Sunday, February 3rd, we will once again collect money for local families in need of food. Vote for your favorite Super bowl football team by dropping a monetary donation into the pot of the team of your choice! The money is donated to the West Side Food bank.



As always, donations of food can be left in the baskets in the back of the church anytime. For the month of January we are collecting sugar, February we will collect Baked Beans.

Angel Tree

Thanks to everyone who took angels from the Angel tree and purchased gifts for those who would not have a gift if we did not help. It is a wonderful outreach to those in our community.

The gifts were given to the Children's Service Center in Wilkes Barre.

Many thanks to Joan Ferraro and Madeline Reed who put up the tree and made all the arrangements for the "gift giving".

News from St. Martha's

In spite of some unforeseen happenings and snowy weather, we were able to put together 26 Christmas bags for the shut ins at the White Haven Center, and also wrap some small gifts for our own shut ins. A special thanks goes to Sheila Ferris who beautifully decorated the Christmas bags and to Norma Zurner who once again volunteered to take them to White Haven.

There will be no meetings in January and February; however, we look forward to getting together again in March when we plan to put together some Easter treat bags for the shut ins at White Haven, and possibly also plan for another hoagie sale in April.

Stewardship Report

Heartfelt thanks for all returned estimate of giving cards. If you have not yet returned your card, there's still time! If you have misplaced your card, there are extra at the front of the church, or call the church office at 287-8440.

Our Consecration Sunday program resulted in **51** returned cards for 2008.

In 2007 there were 51 returned cards. Some of the statistics are:

- 4** new cards
- 23** increased estimated giving from 2007
- 4** decreased estimated giving from 2007

Total 2008- \$60,204.00 (increase over 15%)

(Total 2007- \$51,361.00)

What does this mean? It means we can continue our Mission to love one another through our outreach programs and provide a building for various community organizations.

It means we are demonstrating *our need to GIVE*, as God intended. It means we are growing, spiritual, and committed to worshipping our Father as His children.

Thanks be to God,

Cynthia Johnson Robin Yedlock
Joe Jackloski Ed Macosky

Vestry Highlights

If you have not pledged for the 2008-year,

It is not to late!!!!!!!

Please call the church office, 287-8440 or pick up a pledge card in the back of the church.

Members seeking positions on Vestry

3-year terms

Audrey Tigue
Stuart Oakley
Dave Skoniecki
Joe Jackloski

Lynn Nehila-finishing term of Cynthia Johnson

Thanks to those members whose terms have ended.

Robin Yedlock
Darren Ryan
Ed Macosky
Rusty Flack

Cynthia Johnson, resigned -
Lynn Nehila is seeking to finish Cynthia's term

Jim Youells was appointed as Senior Warden
Theresa Baseski will serve as Junior Warden

Church Calendar Updates

If your birth date or anniversary does not appear on the church calendar during the year, please call Nancy in the church office. If you are unsure, call the office. Nancy would be happy to check. It is important to keep the office up to date!



Sick or in the Hospital?



Please don't assume that the church knows you are sick or in the hospital. Due to the new HIPPA regulations, hospitals are no longer allowed to call

the church unless you ask them to. Family members or friends can call the church at 287-8440, we would be happy to schedule a visit from the rector.

Sunday School Happenings

Thank you to all who attended the Advent IV – Christmas service the children participated in. The kids performed a pageant based on the birth of Christ. They also sang carols, and some played musical instruments. Others were ushers and collected the Sunday offering. The kids also wrote the prayers of the people. *What a wonderful ministry the young people are doing in the church school!!*

This past year the Sunday school has worked on other projects. They collected coats, blankets, hats, scarves and gloves for VISION. They distributed Christmas postcards to the local neighborhood inviting them to attend Christmas services. They made crosses, which were given out at the Children's church service and prepared cards of well wishes for our homebound, which also included a cross.

Soon the kids will be working on another community service project for our troops and also with the elderly. We are planning working on some new songs for Easter and for when the bishop comes in March.

The young people in the confirmation class collected necessary goods for the University Misericordia Single Women with Children's program. The November breakfast was prepared by our confirmation class with the help of some experienced breakfast cooks!

Keep Posted for Upcoming News!!!