

Grace Notes
Grace Episcopal Church
106 Lowell Street
Manchester, NH 03101-1625
www.gracechurchmanchester.org
February, 2012

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106 Lowell St.
Manchester, NH

From the Priest in Charge

Rev. Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro

Grace Episcopal Church

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Clergy

The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Priest In-Charge
The Rev. Joan Barr Smith, Deacon
The Rev. Robert Swanson, Pastoral Assistant

Vestry

Dwight Simmons, Warden
Karen Furtado, Clerk
Richard Feren, Assistant Treasurer
Nancy-Ann Feren, Warden
Warren Koch, Treasurer

2009-2012 Ellen Zimmerman, Sharon Steadman, Janet Mills
2010-2013 Christine Anderson, William Bochinski, Edward Doyle
2011-2014 Kate Murphy, Ann Hewins, Edward High

Staff

Mark Cleveland, Director of Music
Carter Beck, Organist
Justin & Nicole Otto, Church School Coordinators
Marlene Thompson, Administrative Assistant,
Emery Freethey, Sexton
Lydia Adams, Parish Visitor
Susan Senneville, Nursery Care Giver

Newsletter

Lauren Cline
Lauren6997@yahoo.com

Next Newsletter Deadline

February 15, 2012 (please format submissions in .doc format)

“Stewardship Sharings”

Hardwiring my spiritual life

By Sandi Albom

I’m not a very disciplined person. I need an alarm clock to get me out of bed, and sometimes that doesn’t work very well. I need reminders on my Blackberry for the most routine of tasks. I have even gone so far as to put Post-It notes on my dashboard to remind me to buy gasoline for my car...REALLY! This does not make me a bad person, just busy and distracted by my life in general.

Prayer and meditation does not come easily to me. Mostly it’s an afterthought. When I do drag myself out of bed, I head straight for the coffee and a shower. At 8:00 my Blackberry reminds me to stop and thank God for being alive another day, to be grateful for all I have and to ask God to keep me and my loved ones safe for the next 24 hours. This is also the time when I remember the people on the Prayer Ministry list and ask for God’s blessings and attention to their needs. Sometimes it’s only five minutes that I spend, but the time reminds me that “it” really is not all about me.

Around 10:00, I get a message on my computer with a daily meditation topic from Hazelden Publishing. Funny, no matter what the writing is about, it’s always what I need to hear, whether I want to hear it or not.

For the life of me, I cannot remember to write a check to bring to church on Sundays to meet my pledge obligation. I swear that God inspired electronic banking just for absent-minded folk like me! Each month, on the 1st, the check goes out automatically and I receive a confirmation email reminding me that God comes first. And even though a check does not constitute much in the way of paper, I tell myself I am being a good steward of God’s natural resources.

Embracing the available technology we have today has allowed me to connect with God and my spiritual life in ways I had not imagined. I used to think that because I needed to be reminded to pray, I was less of a “good” Christian. Now I know it just makes me human.

My Dear Friends of Grace Church,

I know this is much delayed but I wanted thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your prayers, cards, and support throughout my husband Joseph's illness and death. Thank you have been difficult for me to begin.

Joseph especially enjoyed staying in touch with friends on Facebook and it always boosted his moral. Rev. Marjorie was wonderfully supportive, particularly, the morning of his surgery, within hours of his death and beyond. Deacon Joan Barr-Smith guided me and our children, his brother, and another sister-in-law through our final goodbyes and prayers during Joseph's last minutes. We didn't expect his death but we knew that he was on his way to a heavenly home and that God's arms surrounded us in comfort through our tears.

Church members and the Sudanese community welcomed us all, after a beautiful funeral service, in the 'Great Hall' for a reception that not only fed our bodies but also our souls. Delicious leftovers fed me for several weeks thanks to the wonders of a freezer.

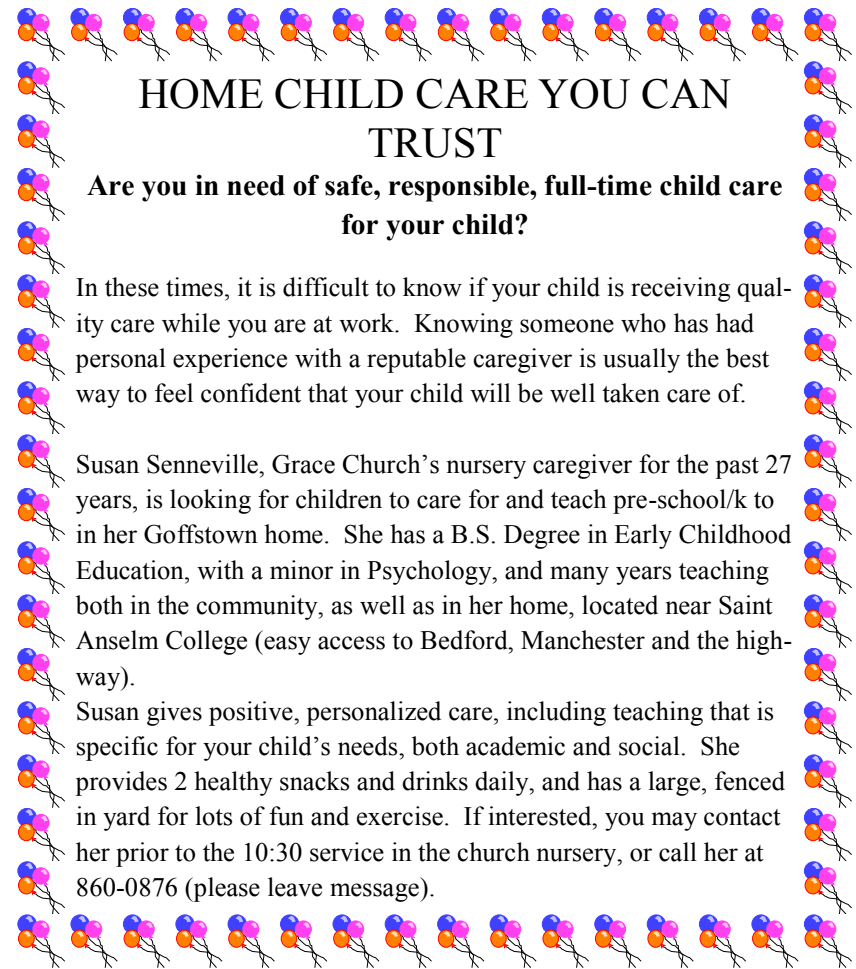
Joseph now lies facing the morning sun beside his first wife and my friend, Laurel, in the Mont Vernon Cemetery in the little Town of Mont Vernon, NH. There Joseph served his last church before retiring from the ministry. His burial was delayed a week and a half due to the ground conditions in this tiny old colonial cemetery. The cemetery and the town sit on the top of a hill with spectacular views of our southern New Hampshire mountains and landscape where Joseph loved to hike and meditate in earlier years. In fact, on one occasion, after hiking to the summit of Mt. Monadnock with his son Dan, he sang the Halleluiah Chorus, keeping a promise to himself. He and Laurel were instrumental in establishing the Annual Messiah Sing at the Mont Vernon Church.

Generous Grace Church members and friends not only donated to the funeral reception but also made significant contributions to a Grace Church Music Fund and a fund toward the partnership with the Sudanese Community.

Bricks for Haiti

Thanks to the generosity of so many of you during Advent, we raised \$1,040 to help in the rebuilding of Haiti. There has been some response as well to the request for toilet-ries, school supplies, and small instruments for us to take to Haiti at the end of February. Thank you!

Jane W. Van Zandt+



HOME CHILD CARE YOU CAN TRUST

Are you in need of safe, responsible, full-time child care for your child?

In these times, it is difficult to know if your child is receiving quality care while you are at work. Knowing someone who has had personal experience with a reputable caregiver is usually the best way to feel confident that your child will be well taken care of.

Susan Senneville, Grace Church's nursery caregiver for the past 27 years, is looking for children to care for and teach pre-school/k to in her Goffstown home. She has a B.S. Degree in Early Childhood Education, with a minor in Psychology, and many years teaching both in the community, as well as in her home, located near Saint Anselm College (easy access to Bedford, Manchester and the highway).

Susan gives positive, personalized care, including teaching that is specific for your child's needs, both academic and social. She provides 2 healthy snacks and drinks daily, and has a large, fenced in yard for lots of fun and exercise. If interested, you may contact her prior to the 10:30 service in the church nursery, or call her at 860-0876 (please leave message).

Reflections AND THOUGHTS

Creation, Intelligent Design, Evolution (Part II)

To continue from last month, how can I say that creation, intelligent design, and evolution are compatible? Let's start by looking at spirit and energy. People will often go to a meeting or special event and then, after it, comment about "the spirit of cooperation" or about "feeling energized." I have had this happen to me, and often enough to be convinced that there is a spirit and energy that goes beyond individuals and the substances of which they are made.

Now let's consider a possible beginning of our current universe, when there was an incredible concentration of matter and energy. Most scientists believe that this could have been the case, and that a huge explosion (called the Big Bang) caused it to spread out. The observed characteristics of our present universe match the properties it would possess if a Big Bang had occurred.

Since the Holy Spirit has been present since the beginning of time, it had to have been part of the Big Bang. As matter and energy spread out, so did the Holy Spirit, which means it is present everywhere and in everything. It was during this time of post-explosion chaos and spreading that all the galaxies, including our own galaxy, our neighboring planets, and Earth itself were formed.

But order out of chaos? Actually, yes. Scientists have discovered that even in situations of seemingly random chaos, patterns emerge, and from those patterns we get the well-ordered universe. Obviously, God knew that before we did, and could therefore allow natural processes to occur.

But what if God wanted to change the direction of evolution? Easy. Consider the fact that even twins who appear identical externally can be very different **in other ways**. One could be a talented engineer, and the other could be a gifted poet. The only difference is a shift of a few molecules in their DNA. Couldn't God shift a few molecules and produce a person with specific traits? And couldn't a shift as subtle as that be considered a natural occurrence? Absolutely. And that is why I say that creation, intelligent design, and evolution are compatible.

Dick Feren

Joseph felt very much at home at Grace Church admiring its design, especially the serenity of St. Michael's Chapel where his final calling hours were held due to power and generator failure at the funeral home. I couldn't think of a better and more appropriate place for him to 'lie in state,' and, it was All Saints Day. He also loved the liturgy of our church and all the 'bells and smells' but particularly the music and the choir. Each new piece of music to be learned was like the delicacy of making a new friend, just as he made wonderful friends in the choir and the church.

I have found it difficult to be without Joseph. Our nearly 8 years (on New Year's Day) was too short but a gift of God nonetheless. While my son and friends have given extraordinary support and comfort, despite their own grief, I continue to struggle, especially with the holidays just past.

I have found it difficult to attend church because I have been so emotional and vulnerable and felt the need to grieve more privately. Most of our time at Grace was seeing and hearing him in the choir and watching him listen and study each minister's sermon intently. Our dear friend, Betsy, who has called to check on me every Sunday after church, said "we will take you in whatever condition you are in."

I will be back soon "in whatever condition". Next weekend my son is helping me drive to DC to see my step-daughter, her husband, and our Grandson Shea for the first time since the funeral. That ought to warm my heart too just as your kindnesses and generosity have.

Thank you for being such a supportive church community – yes, the body of Christ. I know that God – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – is with me and my family and will guide us through a future without Joseph's physical presence but surely with his spirit! Thank you is not enough to express my appreciation for all your support and prayers.

In Christ, Linda Garrish Thomas

Vestry Notes

Karen Furtado, Clerk Decmeber, 2011

In the December 21st meeting, the vestry thanked Marjorie for her commitment and efforts put forth in her first six months at Grace.

We discussed the audit completed of our 2012 financial reports by David A. Kreed, CPA. He found them to be in good order. The only required change was the entry of depreciation expense of \$22,454 to be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

For the month of October, our revenue was lower than budget as well as our expenses so we ended the month close to budget. In November, we received a significant donation (\$77,517) which resulted in the year to date financials to be in the black. The planning and finance committee will be developing a plan for the use of the funds.

We are gaining ground in the Property Capital Fund as early in the year the roof repairs put us in a \$15,000 negative situation. Now we are only negative \$3,490.

The planning and finance committee presented to the vestry a draft of the 2012 budget. The vestry provided recommendations for modifications which will be incorporated in the final budget. The vestry did approve setting the housing allowance for The Rev. Marjorie Gerbract-Stagnaro at \$40,000 for 2012.

The Stewardship committee reported that we have \$16,000 less in pledges than in 2011. There is currently a call campaign in place to follow up with parishioners who have pledged in the past.

The new head of the Property committee is Kevin Von Braun.

The giving tree was a tremendous success this year. The Outreach committee is moving on to plan the Dr. Seuss event which is scheduled for March 10th. We received a letter from St. Andrew's vestry thanking Grace Church for our generous donation of food during Thanksgiving time. The homeless center gifts were well received.

Marjorie will be introducing a children's sermon once a month starting in January, 2012.

The Hospitality committee has been revitalized with a number of new volunteers that have many ideas for 2012. The greening of the church was a great success this year with 38 people participating in the event.

Mary Sargent and Karen Furtado have donated a defibrillator for the parish. There is a committee that has been established to ensure that the church meets all requirements for registration and training.

The date of the annual meeting has been set for Sunday, January 29th.

Vestry Notes

Nancy Ann Feren, Clerk Pro-Tem January 2012

Assistant Treasurer Dick Feren presented the November and December reports. Part of a large donation received in November has been moved to the Operating Fund to pay the arrears of our Fair Share to the Diocese and part was moved to the Property Fund for future use. We have repaid what we borrowed from our Endowment Funds. The only outstanding loan is from the Lovering Fund for \$19,700. This was on the books when we started last year. We ended 2011 in the black.

The Vestry approved the 2012 budget. The category of Outreach/Service Ministries includes knitting, Sudanese ministry, as well as other outreach. The amount in Fellowship/Hospitality was tripled to more accurately reflect expenses.

The Vestry voted to allow Ed High, Dwight Simmons, and Warren Koch to continue signing checks until the paperwork for the new signatories is completed and received by the financial institutions.

The Stewardship committee reported that we are down 3 pledges but up about \$1000 in pledged income.

Some members of the Youth Group will attend a diocesan retreat on Feb. 9 and 10. The youth will sponsor a cake auction on March 17 in conjunction with the St. Patrick's Day corned beef dinner organized by Parish Growth. Participation in the Relay for Life cancer walk is planned for June.

Parish Growth will move forward with the "Come and See" program. An ice cream social with movie night is scheduled for July.

The Property Committee will do a walk-through of the physical plant on Feb. 4 from 9-11 to prepare a "punch list" of what needs to be fixed.

The defibrillator is now ready for use and temporarily located in the office.

Frank and Martha Manley's initial application for Lay Eucharistic Ministers was approved.