



# *Grace Notes*

*January 2013*

Grace Episcopal Church

106 Lowell St.

Manchester, NH

# From the Priest in Charge

Rev. Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro

Blessings and thanks to all those who wrote down, on a total of sixty-six note cards, prayers, hopes, thoughts, and concerns for those impacted by the tragedy of twenty-eight deaths in the town of Sandy Hook, Connecticut in the context of Sunday morning worship during this past season of Advent.

Blessings and thanks to the members of our Prayer Shawl Ministry, who made the numerous shawls that were mailed to clergy and families impacted by the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

**Special thanks to Linda Heath** who organized these gathered prayer cards and shawls and mailed them to the following individuals: The Right Reverend Ian T. Douglas, The Right Reverend Laura J. Ahrens, and The Right Reverend James E. Curry – bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut; the Reverend Kathie Adams-Shepherd, Rector of Holy Trinity, Newtown, Connecticut; the Reverend John Satula, Assistant to the Rector at Holy Trinity, Newtown, Connecticut; the Reverend Mark Moore, Rector of Saint John's, Sandy Hook, Connecticut; the family of Benjamin Wheeler, members of Holy Trinity, Newtown, Connecticut. We received the following thank you note, penned by the Right Reverend James Curry, Bishop of Connecticut, written on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and addressed to the Reverend Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro and the people of Grace Episcopal Church:

Dear Marjorie,

Thank you for the notes and beautiful stole. I know that one of the gifts that sustains the people of Newtown is the outpouring of love from across the Church and the world. Your gift is a tangible symbol of the light of Christ that has come into the world.

Peace,

+ Jim Curry

How do we continue to work through, reflect, and respond to the senseless tragedy we all experienced as parents, grandparents, teachers, lovers of children, and children of God who are appalled at the senseless violence that took place this Advent in the killing of innocents in Sandy Hook? Pray for peace. Take action – with your voice, your words, your ways – to speak out against the misuse of guns.

Most importantly – read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the words of our fellow brothers and sisters who continue to find God in the midst of this horrific experience of 2012.

I particularly recommend the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut’s website, which has remarkable resources posted about speaking to children about this event and a substantial number of sermons, posted from preachers across America, who voiced God into the midst of this senseless act of destruction. One of my favorites was crafted from a colleague I interviewed for my doctoral studies, the Reverend Noelle York-Simmons, who preached: “It is so easy to see the hate and the mean. It is so easy to hear the voices –both inside and outside our heads – telling us we are small, insignificant, flawed, ugly, and useless. We aren’t used to seeing and hearing gentleness and joy. But friends, this morning, the Bible tells us so: Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Find the gentleness within you and outside you. Nurture it, pass it along. The world needs it as much as you. Enfold yourself in the peace of God – the peace beyond all understanding – and know that you are beloved.

May we image peace and the outpouring of love this year of 2013. The light of Christ comes into the world through us.

Marjorie +

Many thanks to Carter Beck for suggesting we embrace and experience a new pageant script on the second Sunday of Advent that told stories about Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, with wisdom and humor. Mark Cleveland and our choir led our congregation in song using various lyrics and refrains to teach about the faith and love of Saint Nicholas during the course of the pageant. Our cast of characters was remarkable and we give thanks for their offering of self in rehearsal and performance:



Director: Carter Beck

Stage Manager/Scripts/Props: The Reverend Dr. Marjorie Ann Gerbracht-Stagnaro

Narrators: Sally Douglass, Martha Manley, Annette Dube

Bishop of Myra: The Reverend Allan Knight

Saint Nicholas: The Reverend Jane Van Zandt

Father: Brent Stagnaro

Three Daughters: Katie Otto, Taylor Harvey, Brianna Harvey

Multiple Husbands/Captain: Mannix Muir

Sailors: Mannix Muir, Katie Otto, Taylor Harvey, Brianna Harvey

Support Staff: Dana Harvey, Kelley Muir, Fiona Stagnaro, Zachary Stagnaro



## Thanks from the Outreach Committee

Thank you so much for your generous support of our Giving Tree project again this year. With your help we were able to deliver gifts to 123 children and 7 adults. The gifts were all delivered in time for Christmas and the warm hats and mittens added to the tree will be delivered to the schools in January.

Thanks also to Courville at Manchester. Our clergy visit there regularly and celebrate the Eucharist with residents. To show their appreciation Courville used money raised from a bake sale to buy gifts for 2 children.

The Outreach Committee and the families from McDonough School, Wilson School, and The Way Home appreciate the generosity of all who participated.

Thanks also to all those who baked cookies which were delivered to 20 Grace Church parishioners who are unable to attend church on a regular basis.

## January Book Club Gatherings:

Take note that our parish book groups will reconvene in January at two separate times to discuss two very different but wonderful literary endeavors.

**On Wednesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM (note the unusual date AND time) we will gather for lunch and discussion at the home of the Reverends Allan Knight and Jane Van Zandt, 58 Hanson Road in Chester (home phone: (603) 895-4583).** At that time our gathering will be unpacking the text Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America by Barbara Ehrenreich. A New York Times best seller, this book was one of the most talked about books of the year when it was published in 2001. Written from the perspective of an undercover journalist, it sets out to investigate the impact of the 1995 welfare reform act on the working poor of the United States.

Millions of Americans work for poverty-level wages, and one day Barbara Ehrenreich decided to join them and try to answer the question, "How can anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 to \$7 an hour?" To find out, Ehrenreich moved from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, taking the cheapest lodgings available and accepting work as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and Wal-Mart salesperson. Instantly acclaimed for its insight, humor, and passion, this book is changing the way America perceives its working poor.

**On Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM we will gather at the Stagnaro home, 618 Hanover Street in Manchester (Marjorie's cell phone: (703) 407-3512).** At this gathering the focus will be the book The Ginger Tree written by Oswald Wind. The book is set in 1903 and tells of a young Scots-woman named Mary Mackenzie who travels to China to marry an English army officer. Isolated from family, trapped in a war zone, bitterly disappointed with her marriage, Mary embarks on a passionate affair with a Japanese nobleman which leaves her pregnant and transformed. The drama traces her story against the background of growing military and political tensions in Japanese life and culminates in the outbreak of the Second World War. The book was made into a Masterpiece Theater series on PBS – a testimony to the fact the prose of this novel depicts masterful storytelling! Please note: **this will be our FINAL evening book gathering due to low attendance.**

Please contact our parish office if you will be attending one or both events and if you are willing to bring a salad, side, drink, or dessert to enhance our feasts.

Marjorie +



## The Call To Serve

**THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE** presents the following slate of candidates for election at the annual meeting which will be held on Sunday January 27, following the **9:00** service. Vestry: Bill Bochinski, Jill Porter and Mary Sargent (3 year terms); Convention Delegates: Anne Milne and Martha Manley (2 year terms); and Convention Alternate: Jim Coleman (2 year term). Watch for biographies of the candidates.

**PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL ONLY BE ONE SERVICE AT 9:00 AM ON JANUARY 27 TO ALLOW FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING AND BRUNCH AT 10:30 AM. See bottom of page 7 for**

# Peggy Trivilino's Thoughts on a Tragedy

For the past week, we have all been reading/listening to various media outlets chronicling the thoughts and prayers that have been pouring out for the victims of the mass shooting Newtown, CT from around the world. But there is something conspicuously missing from these expressions of compassion—apparently no one is praying for the soul of Adam Lanza. I believe that the perpetrator of this awful atrocity needs our prayers as much, or possibly more, than his victims. After all, when he was a baby, just a few minutes old, Adam Lanza was not destined to become a mass murderer. Somehow, his genetic inheritance and his social, familial, and physical environment interacted over the course of his twenty short years to produce the troubled, twisted, tormented young man that he became. Yes, he was very intelligent and able to discern right from wrong, but research has clearly demonstrated that the prefrontal lobe of the human brain—the area which controls executive function—is not fully developed until a person, especially a male, reaches his/her mid-twenties. Possibly, the best thing that we can do as a society to prevent this kind of tragedy from occurring is to do a better job of addressing mental health issues and issues of developmental aberration in children, adolescents, and young adults.

By all accounts, Adam Lanza had a developmental disability—possibly Asperger's Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism. He was highly intelligent and deeply anti-social, a typical Asperger's profile. His mother was a gun enthusiast who took Adam and his brother to shooting ranges and who kept numerous guns, including semi-automatic, military-style rifles in the house. Neighbors reported that she felt that she always had to be “prepared for the worst”, whatever that meant. In sum, he was an extremely bright, socially awkward, and isolated young man who reportedly spent hours playing violent video games and was raised in an environment that placed a high value on firearms and their utility. He was a misfit at every grade level in school and it would seem that his mother was not very effective in advocating for special services for him. This isn't surprising since his academic performance was usually at grade level and school districts are reluctant to spend special education dollars on students who earn satisfactory grades, even if the student is obviously psychologically troubled. And, apparently, there was little or no effort made to obtain private mental health services for him.

Maybe I feel so strongly about this because of my years spent working with children and adolescents who had emotional and behavioral disorders. There is a significant percentage of undiagnosed serious mental illness in this population, early-onset schizophrenia for example. Through the years I came in contact with many potential Adam Lanzas. And there is one thing I know for sure.

We all carry the potential for good and evil within us; given a particular interaction of our genes and our environment, any one of us could be an Adam Lanza. I believe that when I pray for God to have mercy on the soul of Adam Lanza, I am acknowledging that he and I shared a common humanity and also that, "There but for the grace of God go I".

## Vestry Notes

November, 2012

At the vestry meeting on November 28<sup>th</sup>, the September financial were reviewed. There were five Sundays in September which helped to improve our standing for income, although we are still behind approximately \$9,500. October finds us with some improvement as we were tracking to \$4,500 behind budget. The good news is that overall we are tracking \$17,800 ahead of the budget for the year due to lower expenses. One key element is the use of Blue Cross insurance for Rev. Marjorie rather than the diocesan plan.

The Property Committee reported that there are fewer people sleeping on the property which may be due to the weather or due to work of Property Committee this fall. Issues have continued with the homeless during the day causing a change in securing of the church during the day.

"Love Free or Die" Event with Bishop Robinson is scheduled for December 12, 2012. A freewill offering will be taken for NH Prison Ministry. The Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 27, 2013. A vestry retreat is being planned for February 9, 2013

### ANNUAL REPORT

Again this year the annual report will be e-mailed to those people whose e-mail addresses we have. This will save us the expense of mailing it to everyone on our mailing list. Hard copies will be available in the rear of the church a couple of weeks before the annual meeting, or if you would prefer you may call the office and one will be mailed directly to you. **If you are not receiving e-mails from us now, that means that we do not have your e-mail address. Please e-mail the office at [gracechurch@attglobal.net](mailto:gracechurch@attglobal.net)** so that we can add you to our address book.

### ABSENTEE BALLOTS

As outlined in Grace Church's by-laws, absentee ballots are available to those who meet the requirements to vote and will be unable to attend the annual meeting on Jan. 27, 2013. Those of you who will be out of the city or who, by reason of physical disability, or for any valid reason are unable to vote, may call or write to the church for an absentee ballot. Your ballot will be mailed to you at least 3 days before the meeting. You may request the ballot anytime before then. Please return your ballot, sealed in an envelope marked "BALLOT" on the outside and placed in a second sealed envelope bearing the name and address of the absent voter. It must be received at the church before the polls are closed at the Annual Meeting in order to be counted with the other ballots.

# Reflections AND THOUGHTS

## Church Humor

Every once in a while, I see how something church-related might be interpreted differently, and with a humorous twist. I would like to share some of my discoveries with you as a way of starting off 2013 with a smile.

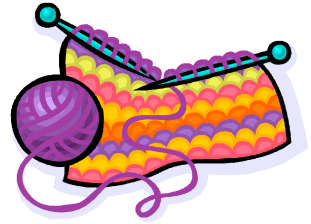
1. If Lay Eucharistic Ministers went to the moon, would the Lunar Engineering Module they were given to ride in be referred to as a LEM-LEM?
2. Microsoft considered making an operating system just for church computers. They were going to call it Stained Glass Windows.
3. I looked out at my bird feeder the other day and saw what I thought was a cardinal, but it was just an archbishop.
4. Money that clergy spends on clerical garments is not considered an expense because it is actually in vestments.
5. Could an oil painting of all people in the parish be considered an Every Member Canvas?
6. Would hawk-like gargoyles on a cathedral be considered birds of pray?
7. The smell of the ceremonial burning stuff makes some people angry. You might say they become incensed.
8. Why is it that when the newly elected vestry wants to move forward, they go on a retreat?
9. Climbing up inside a church steeple can make you in-spired.
10. When a person graduates from seminary and becomes a priest or deacon, do they feel Rev'd up?
11. At the end of a Roman Catholic service, many people leave the building. Is that considered a mass exodus?
12. The service in the Prayer Book usually ends on page 365. During Leap Year, should it end on page 366?

Happy New Year! :)

Dick Feren



# 2nd Annual Grace Church Knitting Retreat



On October 27th, the Grace Church Shawl knitting group held its 2nd annual (hopefully) retreat, from 9am to 3pm. About 25 people attended. They were from St. Christopher's Church in Hamstead, St. Peter's in Londonderry, St. John's in Portsmouth and St. Michael's Catholic Church in Exeter and Parish of the Transfiguration in Manchester, as well as a few who had no church affiliation. There was even a visitor from Plymouth, MA, who knits historically accurate accessories (gloves and socks or stockings) for Plimouth Plantation!

Four participants brought soup to share for a simple lunch, and everyone else brought other goodies to nosh for the rest of the day. There was a chance to introduce everyone and talk about what they were knitting and to just visit and get to know each other.

Participants were able to show projects they had completed and wanted to show the others. A story to meditate on was read, and then, the real challenge: 1 solid hour of silent knitting. Everyone did it! Participants brought needles and yarns that they no longer wanted and others took what they wanted. (Whatever was left was taken to Goodwill.)

The organizers were very happy with the turnout. They heard from other groups in Manchester who had conflicts that day and were not able to attend, but hoped they would be invited next year. They certainly will be! The day was considered a great success.

## From Marjorie+

A wonderful reflection, contributed by Nancy-Ann Feren and read aloud by Linda Chamberlain towards the end of the retreat, told of a knitting ministry that takes place at a men's prison in Maryland. The author of the article remarked on the healing balm that knitting has on the soul. The article prompted both Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro and Leona Thomas to begin dialogue about starting a knitting group at the local women's prison in Goffstown in 2013. Marjorie has been in touch with the Reverend Beth, the Episcopal chaplain at the prison, who is excited about the prospect of us moving forward with this plan. Interested in joining Leona, Marjorie, and others to knit together in love and fellowship at our local prison in 2013? We aren't sure of how often (weekly? every two weeks?) or when we will meet (a weekday morning is the goal), but please call the church office if you are interested in beginning this new ministry.

## **PROPERTY FILES "Uplifting Update"**

Kevin von Braun

### **CONSTRUCTION ZONE AHEAD!**

As of this writing, a meeting is being set with the City of Manchester, John LaPlante of LaPlante Builders, Brent Stagnaro and myself to present the plans and get the ball rolling on the installation of the Accessible Lift. Considering Brent's background, he will be our rep during the project and keep an eye on the technical aspects of the construction. I and your Property Committee will be keeping you up to date with the progress.

Barring any issues with the City, construction should begin in January or February. Financially, we are (were as of writing) almost at the peak of our fund raising dollars goal. We hope last minute, end of year donations toward the project will help us make or exceed our goal.

Thank you for your financial and spiritual support to date and pardon our mess while we make our church accessible to all.

## **CELEBRATING BISHOP ROBINSON**

Our movie night and book signing to honor the faith and ministry of Bishop Gene Robinson that took place at Grace on December 12, 2012 was a huge success! Just over eighty people, many of whom were members of the wider Manchester community and not our own parish, attended the event. Snacks (thanks to Christine Anderson's supreme spiritual gifts in microwaving popcorn) were served in our nave as attendants viewed the new documentary about Gene titled Love Free Or Die.

Following the screening Bishop Robinson facilitated a question and answer session that lasted forty-five minutes, then joined us in the Great Hall for a festive reception. At that time all fifty copies of Bishop Robinson's book God Believes in Love: Straight Talk About Gay Marriage that we had pre-ordered from Random House Publishing were sold and signed by Gene.

Special thanks to all those who helped set up, baked and prepared food for the reception, and then cleaned up following the event. Ann Hewins and Kevin Von Braun, co-chairs of the event, and all the members of our Vestry are to be commended for the extensive work they did to make this night a success. Additional kudos are extended to Maureen Nagle, whose publicity work via articles in The Union Leader and The Hippo alerted the wider community of the event, and Andrew Freshour, who designed and printed wonderful posters to advertise the screening throughout the surrounding suburbs. Thanks to the free will offerings collected that evening and the money our parish previously pledged \$1400 in contributions for the support of the chaplaincy at the New Hampshire Prison for Women in Goffstown will be sent to Gene's retirement purse.

## **Grace Episcopal Church**

106 Lowell Street  
Manchester, NH 03101  
Tel (603) 622-9813  
Fax (603) 669-6044

[gracechurch@attglobal.net](mailto:gracechurch@attglobal.net)  
[www.gracechurchmanchester.org](http://www.gracechurchmanchester.org)

### Clergy

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

### Vestry

Christine Anderson, Warden                      Ellen Zimmerman, Warden  
Karen Furtado, Clerk                              Ed High, Treasurer  
Richard Feren, Assistant Treasurer

2010-2013 Janet Knab, William Bochinski, Edward Doyle  
2011-2014 Ann Hewins, Katharine Strong, Mark Bartram  
2012-2015 Mary Carol Collings, Linda Heath, Kevin von Braun

### Staff

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

### Newsletter

Lauren Cline  
[Lauren6997@yahoo.com](mailto:Lauren6997@yahoo.com)

### Next Newsletter Deadline

January 15, 2013

***Grace Notes***

Grace Episcopal Church  
106 Lowell Street  
Manchester, NH 03101-1625  
[www.gracechurchmanchester.org](http://www.gracechurchmanchester.org)  
January, 2013

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