

*Grace Episcopal Church*  
**NEWSLETTER December 2004**

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*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*  
**Galatians 5:14**

Grace Episcopal Church  
160 High Street  
Medford, MA, 02155

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Grace Episcopal Church  
NEWSLETTER December 2004

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**Highlights of this edition!**

*A Joyous Christmas Brunch*  
**Sunday, December 19**  
**After 10:00 A.M. Service**  
**and Another Festive Fair at Grace Church**

**Roman Catholic Saint's Relics Rest**  
**in Episcopal Parish**

*The Celebrations of Christmas Eve*  
**5:00 P.M.** Children's Worship (and children of all ages) **8:00 P.M.** The Solemn Celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the Eve of the Nativity with Choir and Carols and Candlelight

**Christmas Pageant – January 2, 2005**

**We Need YOU!**

**Nominating Committee Work Continues**

**Oscar H. Greene – One Christmas Eve**

**From the Rector: *Life on the Page – Oscar's Gift to a Family in Faith***

**In This Issue**

On St. Luke	
Roman Catholic Saint's Relics Rest in Episcopal Church	p.3,4
Diocesan Conventions	p.5,6
Join in Discovery	p.6
Weekly Rhythm of Grace Church	
We Need YOU	
Christmas Brunch	p.8
Word	
The Celebrations of Christmas Eve	
Nominating Committee	p.9
GraceWorks Fact Sheet	p.9
Nigerian Brunch	p.10
Walk the Labyrinth	p.10
In Consideration of Confirmation	
Silver Tea Thank You Parishioner	p.10
NewsNotes	
Another Festive Fair at Grace Church	p.11
Christmas Pageant	p.11
Five Finger Prayer	p.12
Christmas This Dark	
Night of Compassion	p.12, 13, 14
Oscar H. Greene	p.15
Rector's Message	p.16
December Birthdays	p.17
Parish Staff	

**Grace Church Newsletter is now available to read on-line.**  
**www.GraceMedford.org**

## ST. LUKE

On St. Luke: “Luke was a Gentile, a physician, and one of Paul’s fellow missionaries in the early spread of Christianity through the Roman world. He has been identified as the writer of both the Gospel, which bears his name, and its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles. He had apparently not known Jesus, but was clearly much inspired by hearing about him from those who had known him.

“Luke wrote in Greek, so that Gentiles might learn about the Lord, whose life and deeds so impressed him. In the first chapter of his Gospel, he makes clear that he is offering authentic knowledge about Jesus’ birth, ministry, death and resurrection. The Gospel is not a full biography – none of the Gospels are – but a history of salvation.

“Only Luke provides the very familiar stories of the annunciation to Mary, of her visit to Elizabeth, of the child in the manger, the angelic host appearing to the shepherds, and the meeting with the aged Simeon. Luke includes in his work six miracles and 18 parables not recorded in the other Gospels. In Acts he tells about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the struggles of the apostles and their triumphs over persecution, of their preaching of the Good News, and the conversion and baptism of other disciples, who would extend the Church in future years.

“Luke was with Paul apparently until the latter’s martyrdom in Rome. What happened to Luke after Paul’s death is unknown. Early tradition has it that he wrote his Gospel in Greece, and that he died at the age of 84 in Boeotia. Gregory of Nazianzus says that Luke was martyred, but his testimony is doubted by most scholars in the fourth century, the Emperor Constantius ordered the supposed relics of Luke to be removed from Boeotia to Constantinople, where they could be venerated by pilgrims.”

## ROMAN CATHOLIC SAINT’S RELICS REST IN EPISCOPAL PARISH

**By Judy A. Kahler, a freelance writer, is a member of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Winter Haven, Fla.**

The story of exactly how three relics of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton came to rest in the altars of an Episcopal church is a mystery, but it’s true.

Three particles from the first American saint’s body rest in the marble altar stones of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church.

Canonized 25 years ago – an anniversary celebrated by Episcopalians and Roman Catholics in New York City on March 25 – Seton’s relics are preserved in round, metal cases covered with crystal, bound by red-colored thread and sealed by the Office of Postulator General of the Causes for the Beatification and Canonization of the Causes of the Saints – an arm of the Vatican.

At St. Paul’s, they are as respected and venerated by the Episcopal parishioners and priest as they are by many Roman Catholics.

But how they got there is a story that might sound strange to most Episcopalians.

The mystery began when the Roman Catholic Church lay to rest the bones of Elizabeth Seton (1774-1821). However, they never really rested. As with many saints, after her canonization in 1975 her bones were divided, authenticated, certified and distributed to a few chosen sites under the watchful eye of the Vatican.

Most of her remains are enshrined at the Roman Catholic basilica in Baltimore. But in 1988, the Congregation of Causes of Saints extracted particles from her body, certified them, sealed them and awarded the relics to specific locations as places of veneration.

One of these sites is St Paul's Episcopal Church and School, where they are revered because St. Elizabeth was first an Episcopalian and because she gave her life to the founding of schools for the poor.

The veneration of relics is a practice understood by few people in the Episcopal Church. "The Episcopal Church has no official position on relics other than respecting the earthly remains of those who have borne heroic witness to Christ," said Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold. "Certainly, the practice of pilgrimage to burial places of saints is not uncommon, nor is the marking of such burial places with candles and flowers unknown." But few Episcopalians are as familiar with the Roman Catholic practice of making a pilgrimage to sites where relics are housed. And because authentic relics are hard to acquire, Catholics have mixed reactions to the news that three of them are kept in an Episcopal church.

"Anymore, it's rare to have them even in the Catholic churches," said Father Anthony Bluitt, pastor of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, which is located just two blocks from St. Paul's. "In this diocese (Orlando) I know of none housed in Catholic churches. They are very sacred to Catholics and normally not found floating around. I would have thought the Vatican would be more strict about giving the relics to anyone."

Sister Irene Fugazy, curator of the St. Elizabeth Seton Museum and a member of the Sisters of Charity, which was founded by Seton, said she could understand why the relics are contained in the altars of the Episcopal church.

Elizabeth Seton was an Episcopalian before becoming a Catholic," said Fugazy. "She was and continues to be, as far as I know, greatly respected by the Episcopal Church.

"If the relics were given to an Episcopal priest and are sealed in altars in an Episcopal church, I see no reason to question their being there. Elizabeth Seton was a devout Episcopalian and in my humble opinion shares her blessings with that

church. I rejoice that she is held in honor by the church of her birth."

Some say that the reason St. Paul's was given the honor of enshrining the relics, was that its former rector, the Rev. William Lahey, was a vicar of the Society of the Holy Cross, a highly traditional organization started by the Oxford fathers and closely aligned with the Episcopal Church's Roman Catholic roots. According to those closest to him, Lahey, who died in 1989 shortly after enshrining the relics in the altars, had connections in high places in Rome.

Unfortunately, Lahey neglected to tell anyone how those connections with Rome were made and when exactly the relics were encased in the altars. But the Vatican's certification papers, as valuable to some as the relics themselves, are stored safely in the office at St. Paul's Parish.

Seton started her life as a prominent Episcopalian, the daughter of a professor at Kings College and the granddaughter of the rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Staten Island, N.Y.

Today the Sisters of Charity are found throughout the United States and in missions around the world. The nuns run schools and colleges care for AIDS patients, the homeless and those suffering from abuse.

Both Episcopalians and Roman Catholics revere Seton as a person who, when her life seemed hopeless, answered a call to minister to the poor.

"Some Anglicans, particularly those in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, have been known to place relics in altar stones and also expose them for veneration in reliquaries on the feast days associated with particular saints," said Griswold.

On Jan. 4, Seton's feast day, as he preached on her life's work, the Rev. Canon Timothy Shaw carried on that tradition by making sure that his congregation at St. Paul's remembered the good works of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

"Especially here, where we are starting a new school, she will be honored and respected," said Shaw.

**DIOCESAN CONVENTIONS ARE  
MORE EXCITING THAN YOU MAY  
REALIZE!**

**A REPORT OF THE 219<sup>TH</sup>**

**DIOCESAN CONVENTION...**

**BY DELEGATE JUNE PIETRANTONI**

**November 5 & 6, 2004, Hyannis, Massachusetts**

To many people, the idea of attending a Convention may sound “boring” and perhaps even uninviting. Not true of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts’ Conventions...! Let me share with you the highlights of “why.”

I have served as a Delegate to Diocesan Conventions in the past that basically dealt merely with “the business” of the Diocese. However, since the election of M. Thomas Shaw S.S.J.E. as our Bishop, Conventions have changed. This year our Diocese held two Conventions: a one-day Diocesan Convention in the Spring and this past week-end (November 5 & 6) the Annual Convention. And, although manly parishioners felt the decision on the Resolution regarding the DOMA Legislation (as a result of the Court’s decision to allow same-sex people to marry in Massachusetts) was the main purpose of the Spring Convention—in actuality, the Convention featured the presentation of the great scholar, educator, musician, and entertainer, Dr. Horace Clarence Boyer, and most of the day’s activities focused on “Music in the Church.”

In the same vein, this Fall Convention’s emphasis focused on “Evangelism” in our Churches.

There were several items of business, most of which were taken up on Friday:

- Diocesan Budget for 2005 (passed)
- Report of the Compensation and Benefits Committee
  - Resolution on Clergy Salaries and Benefits (approved)
- Report of the Committee on Resolutions
  - Resolution for Renewal of

Financial Support for the Anglican Communion’s Struggle Against AIDS in South Africa (approved)  
--Resolution Inviting all Congregations to contribute 0.7% of their annual Budgets in Support of International Developments (approved)  
--Resolution on the Episcopal Council of Indigenous Ministries (defeated/later withdrawn)  
--Resolution on the National Single Payer Health Care System (tabled)

- Resolution that everyone attending Convention will increase his/her pledge by 6% over last year in gratitude and thanksgiving (passed)
- Resolution asking Clergy Compensation Committee to provide ways to advocate for clergy and lay compensation in the future (passed)
- Resolution congratulating the Red Sox (passed)
- Election of
  - 4 Clergy Deputies (and alternates) to General Convention
  - 4 Lay Deputies (and alternates) to General Convention
  - 1 Clerical Member of the Standing Committee
  - 2 Members of the Board of Directors of Barbara C. Harris Center
  - Uncontested Elections
    - Lay Member of the Standing Committee
    - Lay Member of Cathedral Chapter
    - Member of Trustees of Donations
    - Secretary of Convention
    - Treasurer of the Diocese

Three Services of Worship were held during Convention:

Friday Evening Worship

Sermon by Barbara C. Harris

Choir: The Children’s Choirs of St.

Stephen’s Church, Boston and The

Church of the Redeemer, Chestnut Hill

## Saturday Morning Worship

Witness by Starr Anderson

## Saturday Afternoon Celebration of the Eucharist

Sermon by Bishop Gayle E. Harris

Music by a Brass Ensemble

This 219<sup>th</sup> Convention was also the time of Celebration of Bishop Tom Shaw's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of election as our Bishop. Tributes were paid to him and a Reception held in his honor on Friday evening. Bishop Tom was gracious and very humble in his response, mentioning the many blessings this time as Bishop has provided him.

Bishop Tom spoke to the attendees, at length, both on Friday and Saturday. He reflected on many topics, including the Mission Strategy, "finding God's work in the world," the Youth Council and the Youth Leadership Academy, AIDS in Africa, the Windsor Report, "each of us being on mission," the new "Welcome Packets," (we have some), Urban Ethnic Ministries, Urban Assistants Program, Stewardship (80% of the Clergy of the Diocese are Tithing or working toward it), clergy salaries, leadership, and his own prayer life in the past 10 years. He thanked many people for their work and ministry in the Diocese. He concluded by thanking all who have prayed for him and asked that we continue to pray for him, and added, "Thank you for letting me serve you."

The Reverend Bonnie Perry was the special guest who addressed the Convention. Excitement and Evangelism permeated her message. She was raised Roman Catholic and graduated from Holy Cross in 1984. Because she could not fulfill her calling in the Roman Catholic Church, Bonnie became an Episcopal Priest. Due to very low membership and a building which needed much work ("nothing that \$4-Billion wouldn't fix"), the Bishop of Chicago announced he was closing All Saints Episcopal Church in Chicago. A few members held out hope and prayed a lot, and twelve years ago Bonnie accepted a call to the Rector's position at All Saints. The story of the rebuilding of that parish

so that it now holds 3 services of worship each Sunday with an average weekly attendance of 300 is remarkable. Bonnie says, "It took: 1) God, 2) Passion, 3) Vision, 4) Outreach, and 5) Liturgy, and--once you have the vision--that is the formula for us all in our parishes." Each of us in our Church needs to "Know what you love to do and love to do what you do." We will have a copy of the video of this session and share it with you (hopefully soon) so that you can see and hear for yourself Bonnie's story of the miracle of All Saints, Chicago.

A panel from St. Paul's Church, Bedford; Trinity Church, Randolph; and St. Chrysostom's Church, Quincy told of the miracles that are occurring in their parishes here in our own Diocese.

Fr. Tom Cook and I attended the Convention, as your Delegates, on Friday and Saturday and were joined by Margaret Smist and Brenda Pearson on Saturday. Each of us will be happy to share what we gleaned from this vibrant convention week-end with you.

I wish you all could have been there to feel the excitement and sense of "community" that we encountered with our fellow Episcopalians in Hyannis. I call it an "electrifying event."

## JOIN IN *DISCOVERY*

The next session of Grace Church's special offering of Christian Formation and Education for adults runs for 8 weeks beginning Wednesday, December 1 (omitting December 29), 6:30 – 8:30 P.M. The *Discovery Series* is a journey in video images and group discussion that explores Christian faith in a supportive and sacred environment. Brochures are available on the information table near the south door of the nave. Or ask Father Tom for info.

## WEEKLY RHYTHM OF GRACE CHURCH

### SUNDAY LEARNING SERIES FOR DECEMBER

The Sunday Learning Series brings topics of interest before the community of Grace Church on a variety of issues from the Arts and Sciences, Holy Scripture, World Religions, Spirituality and Faith, Community Issues, and more. Speakers from unique backgrounds share their knowledge and experiences and provide time for questions and answers. Sundays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. year round in the Nave of the Church.

- December 5** “The Practice of Prayer”  
**December 12** “Learning Ways that Christians Can Pray” with Rev. Tom Cook  
**December 19** Christmas Brunch – Join us for this annual festive occasion.  
**December 26** “Episcopal 101: Q&A – Bring Your Questions” with Rev. Tom Cook

### MONDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY

Monday Evenings 7:30 P.M. in the Common Rm.  
Will you join us?  
Frank Hazel, Oscar Greene

### DISCOVERY

**Wednesday Evenings 6:30-8:30**  
**8 Weeks in the Parish Hall**  
**December 1-January 26 (omit Dec. 29)**

Discovery is an eight week exploration of the Christian faith and the Episcopal Church. Through shared meals, video presentations, and small group discussions, Discovery provides a safe and enjoyable space where the basics of Christianity are explored and questions are welcome. There is no fee for the course.

6:30 P.M.	Evening Meal
7:00 P.M.	Gathering and Preparing
7:15 P.M.	Evening Programs Adults (mature youth welcome) (and a nursery to provided)
8:30 P.M.	Time to Go Home

## WE NEED YOU!

As reported in the September newsletter, the Vestry has been hard at work setting up a committee structure to support the ongoing activities of the church. To date, we have a number of specific ministries that could use some additional support. PLEASE, consider making a commitment to one of the ministries listed below. Speak to Senior Warden, Margaret Smist (781) 639.7822, if you are interested in serving your Grace Church family in this capacity or any other area not listed below!!

**Administration and Personnel Oversight** – this ministry Group is responsible for establishing and maintaining policies for church employees and also assisting with the hiring process.

**Communications** – Editing and production of the monthly newsletter, signage, hanging posters, updating bulletin boards, submitting articles and pictures to local newspapers, update the WEB and obtaining local cable exposure all fall under the Communication ministry.

In addition to the above, **the GraceWorks Oversight Committee**, is being re-formed. The group meets once every one or two months with the GraceWorks Director to provide support and guidance to the Director of this important ministry at Grace.

The **Newcomers Ministry** is responsible for revising and updating a newcomers pamphlet, assisting with the hosting of Newcomers Lunches at the Rectory and assisting with the organization of Name-Tag Sundays. There is much more to be done in this area and if you have some creative ideas on ways to continue to welcome our Newcomers, this is the Ministry for you!

### **Parish Telephone Directory**

In late February, Grace Church will once again be updating our parish telephone directory. We need a volunteer to organize with the photographer by scheduling sittings and proofing the directory.

## A Joyous Christmas Brunch

**Come one Come All, Let Us Break Bread Together At our Christmas Brunch**

**Where: Grace Church:**

**When: December 19, after 10:00 am Service.**

**Cost: Free Will Offering. ( All proceeds will go towards The Barbara C. Harris Camp)**

Menu: Baked French Toast, Baked Omelettes, Ham, Rolls and muffins.

A sign-up sheet will be provided in the Parish Hall.

For those of you who have last minute shopping to do, or those of you who just can't find the right gift-do not despair. Our very own Margaret Smist will be offering her beautiful baskets to purchase. Plus, ornaments, Gourmet organic coffee and more will be available for sale immediately following the brunch.

**Mystery Guest: You better be good, you better not cry.... HO, HO, HO!**

## WORD

### Advent

The first season of the church's liturgical year, beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas (1 Advent) and ending with the first Eucharist of Christmas. Advent is traditionally regarded as one of two penitential seasons (the other being Lent). But Advent is better thought of as a season of solemn preparation for remembering Christ's incarnation at Christmas and for anticipating the eschatological fulfillment of his promise to return in power and great glory. The season's biblical readings focus on the endtime and on God's promise for the people of Israel and the church of Christ. The color of the season is purple or deep blue.

## THE CELEBRATIONS OF CHRISTMAS EVE

Grace Church will celebrate the birth of Jesus with two services of Holy Eucharist.

### 5:00 P.M.

Children's Worship

An active service, a time for younger ones (and children of all ages) to experience love and joy in the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

The congregation is asked to bring a gift of non-perishable food to place under the Christmas Tree for delivery to area Pantries for the help of those in need.

**And**

### 8:00 P.M.

The Solemn Celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the Eve of the Nativity with Choir and Carols and Candlelight

Remember to share this time with friends and family; invite others to join with us on Christmas Eve.

## Nominating Committee Work Continues

The Nominating Committee's work is well underway. Our meetings to date have focused primarily on reviewing the nomination process and developing a strategy for accepting and pursuing nominations. The committee will build a slate of candidates to be shared with the parish as early in January as possible, and formally presented at the Annual Meeting in late January 2005. Again, open positions include:

Sr. Warden (3-year term)  
Clerk (2-year term)  
Three Vestry positions (3-year terms)  
One Vestry position (2-year term)  
Delegate to Diocesan Convention (2-year term)  
Alternate Delegate to Diocesan Convention (1-year term)  
Five Delegates to the Mystic Valley Deanery (1-year terms)  
Two Medford Council of Churches representatives (1-year terms)  
Episcopal City Mission representative (1-year term)

Our goal is to make the nominating process as transparent as possible and to encourage active congregation participation in the process. Please feel free to approach any committee member to provide nominations and ask any questions you may have. Upon receipt of nominations, the committee's role is to ensure and verify that such nominees are willing to serve if elected and are duly qualified in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Massachusetts, and our own By-laws. For example, our Constitution and By-laws require that those serving for office be members of the church, participating in worship and offering pecuniary aid for at least six months prior to the Annual Meeting.

We will soon be approaching qualified nominees to determine their interest in being on the slate. In addition, we are preparing brief write-ups on what serving in various positions entails (e.g., typical activities, minimum time commitment,

commonly asked questions). We will share these overviews with potential candidates and the parish at large in the very near future. We also encourage that those who are considering accepting a nomination speak with those who are serving or have served in positions of interest to learn more about their individual experiences.

Serving Grace Church in a leadership position and actively participating in various ministries can be very rewarding. Our goal is to provide everyone with the information needed to understand the process and make informed decisions.

Nominating Committee Members: Tom Daly, Linda Fiorenza, Naida Gavrelis (chair), Brenda Pearson, and Margaret Smist,

## **GRACEWORKS FACT SHEET**

### **Financial Information**

In June 2002, Grace Church extended to the program seed money to cover the start-up costs to re-open the program. GraceWorks has been in a re-payment of these funds for one calendar year. Thirty-three percent of the funds have been repaid.

GraceWorks has an annual operating budget of \$120,000.

GraceWorks contributes \$12,000 each year to the operating fund of Grace Church.

Through its operating budget, GraceWorks, in partnership with the Vestry and Building Committee, is undertaking an extensive Capital Improvement Plan for the lower level of the parish hall.

This improvement plan will enable the program to expand and provide quality Early Care and Education to 18 toddlers and pres preschoolers in June 2005.

The annual operating budget of the Expanded program will be \$360,000. This will add an additional \$15,000 to the operating fund of Grace Church.

## THE NIGERIAN BRUNCH

We are extremely grateful to **Agnes Opara and her daughter, Ebby, Genita Johnson and her daughter, Genita, and Nkechi Cynthia Nwachukwu**, and others who assisted them for a very uplifting and gracious **meal in the tradition of Nigeria** on All Saint's Sunday. Agnes's remarks were also moving and gracious.

## WALKING THE SACRED PATH AN ADVENT JOURNEY TO WALK THE LABYRINTH AND JOIN OTHER CHRISTIANS IN NIGHT PRAYERS

All are invited to join Father Tom in this spiritual retreat for Advent on Tuesday evening, November 30, 7:00 P.M., at the Episcopal Cathedral at 138 Tremont Street in Boston. Want to go in town (via the T) together? Call Father Tom to join in.

## IN CONSIDERATION OF CONFIRMATION

The sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated in the Mystic Valley Deanery (of which Grace Church is a part) on April 2, 2005. I invite all members of Grace Church who have not received the sacrament of Confirmation to join me for a conversation about this event so important in the life of Christians in the Episcopal Church on Sunday, January 9 during the *Sunday Learning Series* following the 10:00 service of Holy Eucharist.

## A SILVER TEA THANK YOU

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all who made this year's Silver Tea so enjoyable. So many of you gave of your time and/or donated so many delicious sandwiches and desserts. All who attended raved about how lovely the Tea was.

My Sincere Thanks,  
Linda Rogers

## PARISHIONER NEWSNOTES

Join the **Coffee Hour** ministry. We need volunteers to serve as hosts. Sign up to make coffee or to contribute a snack on a specific date. Remember – “When serving others you are serving Christ.”

Barbara and Ed Ligon's son, **Teddy Ligon**, is a junior at Bowdoin College in Maine. He is spending the first semester of his junior year studying in Capetown, South Africa. The semester runs from July through November. He has been over there since June 24<sup>th</sup>.

Part of the program involves a significant amount of volunteer work in the townships. Since Teddy loves basketball, he has been working with the kids in the schools – teaching them the basics and getting teams started.

The academic program in South Africa officially ends on November 15th. This is the start of their summer holiday.

Teddy is staying in South Africa to run a two week basketball camp for teenage boys and girls. (It is being set up to resemble Shoot Straight here in the US.) The program is called Hoops for Hope. Others helping run the program with Teddy are students that he has met from South Africa, Israel, and California. He is due back home on Friday, December 3 – just in time to be the Godfather to his niece Imani. The Baptism will be at Grace Church on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

**The Food Pantry.** Christmas is coming. If everyone would bring even just one non-perishable item between now and Christmas our food baskets would be overflowing.

If you would like to contribute to the monthly Newsletter, please contact Jill Galluccio before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month at [JillJoAnn6@aol.com](mailto:JillJoAnn6@aol.com) or 781.395.4370. Thank you.

## Another Festive Fair at Grace Church

Despite the inclement weather, our Medford neighbors and fellow parishioners turned up to support Grace Church at our annual fundraising fair on November 12 and 13.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the planning and the weekend activities. Without each of you, the Fair could not be the great success it has become as our kick – off to the holidays at Grace Church. Lisa Chesnell, Jean Spiers and Linda Rogers worked very hard with their crews to provide us with delicious lunches, snacks and Teas. Pre-Fair work was handled by Jill Galluccio (Advertising and PR) and Adele Hale and Jim Pearson Jr. (signage). Set up and break down thanks are extended to Matt Fenn, Tom Daly, Steve Viggiani, Bill Smalley, Warren Ramirez and Steve Duggan. Treasurer, Walter Greene was busy in the church ‘counting room’ all weekend!

Our popular tables were (wo)manned by Naida Gavrelis (Ornaments), Wool Warmth (Mildred Spencer and Louise Fortino), Jewelry (Stephanie Duato, Betty Beatrice and Joan Pappalardo), Children’s Toys (Maria Fenn), Odds and Ends (Carol and Mary Thompson), KOKA Wreaths (Wes Foote), Coffee and Books (Julia Lisella, Elise Daly), Raffle (Karen Staples, Madeline Blodgett and Jill Galluccio), Bake Table (Beverly Convery and Inez Reese), Cookie Table (St. Anne’s Guild!) and Baskets –many thanks to my Grace church friends who assisted with assembly of baskets.

Another big thank you to Trash and Treasure which is located in the basement and works for 2 weeks prior to the Fair preparing for the weekend – Joan and Bill Williams, Ruthanne and Jim Pearson, Steve and Laura Duggan and crew did another fantastic job!

In advance, I apologize for any errors or omissions of names – thank you ALL!

A mini – Fair will be held in the Commons Room on Sunday, December 19 to give everyone in the church to do some last minute shopping. Gift baskets, ornaments, Gourmet organic coffee and more will be available for sale immediately following the brunch. All proceeds from our mini-Fair will be donated to the Bishop Barbara C. Harris Camp and Conference Center.  
Margaret Smist

## CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

**January 2, 2005** The Youth of Grace Church will be celebrating the The Christmas Season and Epiphany by presenting the parish with a very special gift. On Sunday January 2, the children will be performing a Christmas Pageant! All children are welcome to participate - speak to Laura Duggan or Karen Williams if you would like your child to be involved or if you would like to assist with the planning of the event!

## FIVE FINGER PRAYER

This is so neat. I had never heard this before.....  
This is beautiful -- and it is surely worth making the 5 finger prayer a part of our lives.

1. Your thumb is nearest to you. So begin your Prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember. To pray for our loved ones is, as C. S. Lewis once said, a "sweet duty."

2. The next finger is the pointing finger Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors, and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction. Keep them in your prayers.

3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the president, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. These people shape our nation and guide public opinion. They need God's guidance. Also include our servicemen and women here and abroad who always stand tall in the duty of defending and protecting our nation. They need God's strength and comfort.

4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprising to many is the fact that this is our weakest finger; as any piano teacher will testify. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need your prayers day and night. You cannot pray too much for them.

5. And lastly comes our little finger; the smallest Finger of all. Which is where we should place ourselves in relation to God and others. As the Bible says, "The least shall be the greatest among you." Your pinkie should remind you to pray for yourself. By the time you have prayed for the other four groups, your own needs will be put into proper perspective and you will be able to pray for yourself more effectively.

Should you decide to send this to a friend, you might brighten someone's day! Pass this on to someone special... I did.

Submitted by: Margaret Smist

## CHRISTMAS THIS DARK NIGHT OF COMPASSION

**Suzanne Guthrie, author of "Grace Window: Entering the Season of Prayer," is a priest of the Diocese of New York's Hudson Valley Ministry and rector of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Washingtonville.**

Christmas 1989. The children have gone to Germany to spend the holidays with their father. I decided to go to a monastery. If you can't have four children banging around at Christmas, you might as well have silence. Silence turns Christmas inside out.

Monks and guests have decorated the chapel with fir boughs, wreaths and ivy. At vespers, the youngest monk, carrying a thurible full of blazing incense, accompanies the oldest monk to the altar. The elderly bearded man carefully takes the crèche figure of the Christ child into his arms. As the monks sing, he carries the child to the manger. Some remain in the chapel afterward to revere this moment in time, or time 2,000 years ago, or some soul time between. I long to take the wooden child into my own arms, but instead light four candles in the votive stand nearby.

Over a hundred people crowd into the chapel for midnight Mass. The unchurched, the folks you see at shops in town or at the local deli, come to Mass at the monastery at Christmas. With them, within the music and prayers, in the bread and in the wine, and in the candlelight and in the shadows of darkness and under the silence, I hear the Word being whispered into the world. After Mass, the monks invite all the midnight guests to a collation of good foods, wine and desserts in the octagonal refectory. Candles on the tables and on the windowills provide the only light. The flames reflecting again and again in the windows, the hum of conversation, the busy dance of greeting, give the impression of a flowing honeycomb.

In years before, this same hour had been the only time in the Christmas holiday I could give to

silence. After all, at Christmas we are cooking and baking and decorating both home and church, wrapping presents, helping the children with their own preparations of shopping and wrapping or making things or performing.

On Christmas Eve there's the pageant, then our hot cider and cinnamon sticks at home, our reading together and singing our youngest putting Jesus into our own crèche by candlelight. Then, back to church for the midnight service, helping readers, acolytes, musicians, priest and other participants prepare to celebrate a beautiful liturgy for our guests, and then preaching, singing the Mass and staying late to greet people afterward. Coming home alone in the middle of the night, lighting the Christmas tree lights and sitting in the wing chair, I usually spend an hour in the night regarding the mystery of the Incarnation before going to sleep for a few hours. Soon the children rise, refreshed and excited to open presents

The monastery reverses time, turning my Christmas inside out. Most of the time one way or the other, in chapel or on walks, or sitting in my room watching the Coast Guard boats cut channels through the icy river, I regard sacred time in solitude and in silence, giving the balance of my time to mystery. This year, in the deepest part of the night, laughing and talking and eating in the flowing noisy refectory, quiet exchanges time with festivity. Early in the mornings after Matins I take coffee and sit in darkness. I dread this cold season of loss, despite the stark beauty. The bare trees force me to uncover my own nakedness in prayer, wounds I habitually clothe, dark visceral bruises of memory.

I try to pray. Prayer does not come. Here in the monastery I cannot hide my pain with busy-ness. No need to leave the house: no children to drive to lessons and parties and sports practice. I do not have to run to the grocery store before cooking supper, no children to take sledding or ice skating or to the movies. I don't have a job, either. No bus running around a parish or an office to hide my secrets behind competence and good humor. I have a secret: I know why so

many people love the manger scene. In this violent season of anxiety, false memory, irrational expectations, we love the crèche because we know that sometimes a wayfarer's shelter is a safer place than our own home.

I sit with my cold hands around my coffee cup, facing east, anticipating the dawn until the sun rises right into my face. Every day this week is a Holy Day – with festival Eucharist, music, splendid dinners and desserts; St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents.

**Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were 2 years old and under, according to the time which he has ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more."**  
(Matthew 2:16-18)

A monk stands up spontaneously after the gospel to talk about King Herod, "a person so intoxicated by power as to become soul dead, so damaged as to be able to order the arbitrary slaughter of children." It is the king who is imprisoned, says the preacher, by the lack of capacity for compassion. The monk then calls the faithful, from this dark side of the Christmas story, to prayer.

I find myself weeping, sobbing. Christmas, dark side out. Compassion for the one lacking compassion? Compassion for the one actively nurturing that dark emptiness where his soul should be?

With my tears, prayer comes. Prayer for a world terrorized by fear of that one hour of mystery that cannot be controlled, contained, taken by force or power, money or threat. I pray for a world still killing a child at its mother's breast. I pray for a world jealous of the loved child, jealous enough to murder souls. I pray for the soul through

whom violence came to dwell in my own heart. I pray for the parents of a brutalized boy, who would one day grow up to bully and bruise. I pray for the boy.

The next morning before Matins, surrounded by the sweet scent of Christmas greens one votive candle, I take the Christ child out of the crèche and hold him to my breast, rocking him tenderly at the foot of the altar in the dark.

## ONE CHRISTMAS EVE by OSCAR H. GREENE

It was 4:00 p.m., on December 24<sup>th</sup>, and my wife Ruby's words rang in my ears, "Birthdays are wonderful, but Christmas is that special time to remember each other." My heart ached because she always did. On this festive eve, I was worried.

Christmas Eve at the industrial plant where I worked was a special time. Coworkers glowed. There were handshakes and hugs as "MERRY CHRISTMAS" rung up and down the aisles. Joy filled the air.

It was a jubilant time for us working the 3 until 11 shift. We were permitted to leave work at 7:00 p.m. – four hours earlier. Precious hours to spend with family and lived ones. An eagerly anticipated evening off, other than Sundays, some holidays, and those too brief summer vacations.

Yet, this Christmas Eve I was troubled. Even though work conditions had slumped since September, as contracts terminated and layoffs began, I was caught napping. Overnight I was demoted from highly-skilled machine operator to floor sweeper. Suddenly, financial obligations soared as income dwindled. Now, it was Christmas Eve and I didn't have money to buy Ruby a Christmas gift. We were married thirteen years, and I had always managed a gift, even during my wartime duty overseas with Army of the United States. This year was different, and I was desolate.

This was the time before easy credit and the avalanche of credit cards. I scolded myself for poor planning. I chided myself for being unfair and short-sighted. I should have sacrificed and saved through a Christmas Club or a Thrift Club at the local bank.

To ease my tensions, I swept the floor vigorously. I dug into corners, into nooks and crannies. I felt a warm pride about my area. I always felt good about a job well-done, no matter how menial.

One by one, coworkers complimented me about the area. "it sparkles, Oscar," they yelled.

As I pushed the broom I prayed. I asked God to forgive me and to help Ruby understand. I asked Him to ease her disappointment and to show me a way to make up to her. Even if she understood and forgave, would that erase the fact I had failed? I knew she had scrimped and saved. She would remember. I was ashamed.

The evening passed quickly and my thoughts remained troubled. It was 7:00 p.m., and time to go home.

I was placing my broom in the closet when I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned and faced Al, a small dark-haired coworker, from the machine area where I formerly worked. He was a highly skilled mechanic whose years of company service prevented a layoff or downgrade.

"Oscar," he said, "your area always looks nice, but tonight it's tops! We miss you being on the machine, and we want you to have a Merry Christmas!"

He reached and pressed something in my hand. I looked and saw two new, crisp, ten-dollar bills, more than enough for Ruby's gift. It was from coworkers who were not required to be so thoughtful. My eyes glistened as Al thoughtfully looked away. I swallowed hard and thanked him.

I left work and boarded a bus, my mind racing with thoughts concerning a gift for Ruby. Then, on that noisy, crowded bus, I closed my eyes and thanked God for touching the hearts of my coworkers. My prayers had been answered. Ruby would receive her gift just as I received the thoughtfulness and appreciation of coworkers. It would be a Merry Christmas. I was certain of that!

## **From the Rector**

### ***LIFE ON THE PAGE: OSCAR'S GIFT TO A FAMILY IN FAITH***

I only received the gift for about three years. I can only imagine how blessed I would have been with many more years in which to receive it. Not too long ago the articles stopped appearing; nevertheless, I cannot escape the feeling that the gift they intended to reveal continues to be given.

For a decade, I am told, Oscar Greene opened the window of his soul and shared with friend and stranger alike the stories and reminiscences, heartaches and humor, hopes and dreams, triumphs and disappointments of life that made their way into the panorama of his keen vision and sensitive hearing. In a church newsletter, no less. Not really a place to find fame or fortune, probably not a place to expect an extensive audience. But what a canvas upon which to spread a good word to lift up a people so near and dear to one's heart!

What motivates an individual to devote so much time to a task for which there is no recompense and for which there is no requirement? I suppose I could surmise that Oscar writes because he is a writer, but that would not mean he must write for us. Maybe at some time in the past he was asked to write for Grace Church, but such a request would have long ago lost its immediacy, yet articles continued to appear faithfully, month by month, year by year. I could suggest that Oscar wrote them because he liked to do it, and that would probably ring true, but even ten years of doing something one likes to do can become, at times, wearisome or rote.

Perhaps I can be forgiven if my musings venture too far from truth or too near to personal, but, in the short time I was a part of a circle of readers, a receiver of the gift, I began to feel the motivation coming principally from love. Oh, not just a love

for me or for a cadre of fans or even for the people of a church alone. When people share the gifts they are given with such intent to uplift and enlighten and entertain and strengthen, I figure it is a gift driven from within by a greater love that will not be contained, an urgent love, maybe a troubling yet wholesome love that cannot lie still. It's a love with which we try to connect each Sunday when we gather as Grace Church. It's a love that, somehow, finds its source in the One who is greater than us. Oscar's writings reveal a hope and desire for a better world, a world where love prevails. That hope and desire can lead one to devote many years, even a lifetime, to the task of its realization.

So, at the risk of being presumptuous or even overly sentimental, I'm going to hold that somewhere within each of Oscar's monthly offerings, there was a manifestation of love. And I want to acknowledge publicly a gift well given in the articles that Oscar has offered this community through our parish newsletter for so many years. Though the articles no longer cover the page, the generosity and love they delivered will long continue to work their good will upon the life of the people of Grace Church. Thanks, Oscar, for painting, for a time, a good vision of life on the page.

December Birthdays

*Remembering we are all children of God, let us pray for those having birthdays  
during the month of December*

December 2	James Pearson, Jr., Janet Smith
December 4	Mary Kibe, Helen Sweeney
December 5	Laura Duggan
December 6	Clarence Ligon III, Gail Matthews DeNatale
December 8	Hannah Rogers
December 9	Alexander Stinson
December 10	Thomas Dow, Paula Vadala
December 13	Sharon Brown
December 15	Reverend James Karanja
December 18	Adele Hale
December 21	Sarah Meinhardt
December 22	Toni Candow
December 23	Rebecca Ann Spence, Victoria Mae Spence
December 25	Jone Marceau
December 27	John Buonaugurio, Jessica Marino

**GRACE CHURCH PARISH LEADERSHIP**

**Clergy & Staff:**

THE REV. THOMAS R. COOK, Rector  
ANNA AGUAYO, Sexton  
TATIANA BEATO, Parish Administrator  
CHRISTINE GNADT, Director, GraceWorks

**Officers:**

MARGARET SMIST, Senior Warden  
STEPHEN DUGGAN, Junior Warden  
WALTER GREENE, Treasurer

**Vestry:**

TOM DALY, JILL GALLUCCIO, JULIA LISELLA, BRENDA PEARSON, JOHN ROGERS, JR., CAROL THOMPSON, BILL WILLIAMS

**Ministries:**

Acolytes & Ushers: LINDA FOOTE, JILL CAPPUCCIO  
Adult Bible Study: FRANK HAZEL, OSCAR GREENE  
Altar Guild: RUBY GREENE  
Annual Pledging & Stewardship: CAROL THOMPSON  
Christian Formation / Education: STEVE DUGGAN, JOHN ROGERS  
Communications: JULIA LISELLA, JILL GALLUCCIO  
Evangelism, Sharing & Service: BRENDA PEARSON  
Facilities Care: TOM DALY, BILL WILLIAMS  
Finance Committee: WALTER GREENE  
Food Donation Ministry: CAROL THOMPSON, BEVERLY CONVERY  
Hospitality & Parish Life: BEVERLY CONVERY, STEPHANIE DUATO  
Newcomers: MARGARET SMIST

*Grace Church is a congregation of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Massachusetts.*

THE RT. REV. M. THOMAS SHAW, SSJE, Bishop  
THE RT. REV. ROY CEDERHOLM, Bishop Suffragan  
THE RT. REV. GAYLE E. HARRIS, Bishop Suffragan