Good morning. I'm Irene Pointon, and I'm currently on Council here at Grace. I'm a retired teacher and my background is in music. I'm also on the Parish Life committee and I'll be volunteering with Family Promise this week.

I want to take a few moments this morning to talk about something close to many of our hearts: serving campus and community.
Friends, we live in a world filled with people who deeply need hope, kindness, and compassion. And we bring those qualities to life when we, as God's people, are willing to give of ourselves. When we give our time, when we share our skills, when we offer our hands and hearts, we become visible signs of God's grace in our community.

The book of James, chapter 2, poses the question:
What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

These verses aren't just a call to take action, they are a reminder that action through serving is at the core of who we are as followers of Christ. Here at Grace, we know that our calling extends beyond the walls of our church, to the campus we have been connected with for so many years, and to the greater community where many of us live and work.

The Winthrop campus is full of young minds eager to grow, learn, and find their place in the world. But many students may also feel disconnected or overwhelmed by the pressures of academic life and the challenges of being away from home for the first time. Many may be searching for purpose or community. As a congregation, we have the opportunity to extend our welcome to these students, offering them not just a warm greeting, but a true example of God's love. Whether it's by providing a meal for a Tuesday WELCM dinner, or attending a concert that one of our music interns is involved with, or cheering for student athletes at a sporting event, we can show our Winthrop neighbors that we support them and they can find that sense of community here with us too.

Our neighbors in the greater community around us also need us. Volunteering in our neighborhoods, schools, shelters, and with our outreach partners is one of the clearest reflections of God's love in action. The beauty of volunteering is that it not only blesses others, it also transforms us. It deepens our sense of gratitude, strengthens our bonds as a church family, and reminds us that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We begin to see the world through God's eyes, eyes that notice the overlooked, the hurting, and the forgotten. Every act of service we perform, no matter how small, becomes a living testimony of Christ's compassion.

This is what the Church is called to be. Not just a building, not just a Sunday gathering, but a people who take the love we receive here and carry it out into the community. Let's continue to be a church that lives out our faith through action. As you consider your stewardship commitment this year, of your finances, your time, and your energy, I invite you to think about how your faith can be active. Think not only about what you can give, but about how you can serve. Every prayer, every hour of service, every dollar shared becomes part of something much larger: God's work, our hands. Through your giving, God's love is made tangible. Through your service, God's kingdom takes root right here among us.

Thank you.