

May Remarks from Our Pastors

In their reports to Council each month, Pastor Gregg and Pastor Rachel conclude with some personal remarks that summarize the most recent period of their leadership here at Grace.

Senior Pastor's Remarks:

Easter Sunday is a happy occasion, albeit a heavy task for clergy. This year we had an additional wrinkle, too. We were just returning to our offices after the second of three services, and because we have a new puppy, we were hurrying to get him outside before there was 'trouble'. Unfortunately, upon opening the door to the office with their kennel, our noses told us that 'trouble' had beaten us to the punch. Our little fella had become ill, and we had approximately 30 minutes to clean him, our other dog, the kennel they shared, and make sure to sanitize ourselves before leading the final worship service.

I returned later that afternoon to clean the carpet more thoroughly, and in that process, I thought to myself, what a mess Easter can be. Easter is messy. Resurrection is messy. For all that death takes from us, it *does* bring a kind of order. Death is the end of a story. Resurrection opens a whole new book, one that is being filled with new pages so quickly that no reader can keep up the pace. Resurrection, beginning with Jesus, transforms all things, as we will hear from John's vision next Sunday in worship:

¹I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." ⁵And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." (Rev. 21:1-6)

This vision of God's resurrection power making all things new is stunning. The whole earth is new. Heaven is new, too. God will dwell among us, and pain of grief will be cast aside forever.

I believe this kind of transformation will, someday, take place in its entirety. It is important to remember, though, that this transformation has already begun in the resurrection of Christ. For all the deeply troubling things taking place in our time, there are also glimpses of this total transformation of all things. We need to be a people who actively look for this transformation around us, because we all know looking for tears, death, and destruction is the content more easily spotted.

I have seen transformation at Grace. We have transformed many of our spaces. We have transformed the way we worship together. We have transformed our approach to our neighbors. We are continually transformed by the good news of resurrection and even when the transformation it brings is messy, we remain confident that God can remove any stain through this power.

My invitation to you as we continue Easter together is to look for something or someone transforming for the better and as you see the new shape emerging, cheer on the change! Dwell in the continuing story of God's redemption through resurrection. Spend time in thankful prayer that our merciful God does not leave us in the muck of our present circumstances, but lifts us up, makes us clean, and loves us into new life.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

Pastor's Remarks:

With two puppies in our family now, one being less than three months old, I'm spending a lot of time outside. Potty breaks wait for no one! And a side gift of those hours spent outside has been watching things bloom and leaf out in real time. I was shocked at how quickly our backyard trees went from flowering buds to fully leafed – it was just three days for one tree! I could see hourly changes in leaf volume and shadow coverage. It was amazing to see the growth that manifested in such a short time, once the growing season arrived.

The trees are what I thought about as I contemplated this last month at Grace. It has become the "growing season". I can't say exactly why - maybe it does have something to do with spring, and the warm weather drawing us out again. I'm seeing more and more people show up and "leaf out."

Worship and Sunday School numbers continue to grow, and we have new visitors and returning visitors joining us. I'm seeing people growing in themselves. Many of you are trying new things in this season: joining committees, volunteering for tasks, popping by Grace to take care of things. Even people who have been members for years are trying out roles they've never tried before! Our Youth are a great example of this, as Youth Sunday comes up this week. Almost all of the Youth are trying a new role in leading worship this Sunday, and they chose those roles for themselves! It's exciting to see our congregation recognize their gifts and look for places to use them, and to hear encouragement from one another as they do so.

I wonder what growth you're seeing right now. Have you been trying something new? Have you been encouraging someone else who's trying something new? Have you been noticing the crowd growing at worship and greeting our visitors? These are the stories of the Spirit moving among us, calling us to use our gifts for God's glory! I encourage you to look for the growth among us, and share where you see it!

Peace in Christ,

Pr. Rachel