

January Remarks from Our Pastors

From Pastor Gregg

Looking back on the year we have shared for descriptive words to summarize what we have experienced, several themes spring to mind, but chief among them are generosity and graciousness.

Generosity is an obvious theme of a year in which we finished with a six-figure surplus. While that financial blessing is tremendous and a testament to the faithful stewardship of our people, it is not the focus of the generosity I am addressing.

Looking back, I am astounded by the generosity of response to the needs of others, particularly those who struggled with connection during the pandemic. Throughout the year, I was asked repeatedly, 'Who needs help?' by so many parishioners. Our people have not spent this time of isolation passively, but have instead sought to use their time and abilities to reach out for the sake of those who are hurting. Phone calls, cards, text messages, emails, and video chats have all been on the rise. The community we have at Grace may have been *formed* largely by convenience - after all, most of our relationships started because we worship in the same building - but our relationships have transcended that point. In that way, we have *proven* what we always assumed true, that we really *are* a family, and we stick together regardless of the circumstances. Your pastors have tried to enhance that connectedness throughout this time, and the recent addition of Communion on porches, decks, etc. is a good and recent example of one way we continue to be available. Even though it has been a bit chilly, this practice is quickly becoming one of my favorite parts of ministry.

As for graciousness, I have spotted that trait everywhere this year. We have no shortage of issues and perspectives that could, if we are not careful, be cause for our division. Racial injustice, nationwide elections, and this terrible pandemic each present daunting challenges of their own, but reckoning with all of them at once is a tall order. The physical isolation we experience only magnifies the larger societal trend of polarization all around us. We have fared remarkably well this year, and have continually embodied graciousness to one another. And make no mistake, we are a congregation with diverse opinions! Yet since we do not allow these things to separate us, we have been even more a witness to the ways in which, in Christ, there is no division. In Christ, we have something much more important than anything else that would divide us. We have a loving Lord who welcomes us, regardless of our opinions, sins, failures, or successes. And in one another we have endless opportunities to extend that same graciousness beyond ourselves. So I end the year with only thanks in my heart, for the grace you extend to me, and our witness together.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

From Pastor Rachel

This January, we are wrapping up and starting up a number of different things. We're wrapping up our fall Stewardship drive and we'll be announcing those results in the next week. We're wrapping up our 2020 goals of Equipping and we'll be sharing stories about how we did God's work in the midst of a pandemic. We're wrapping up the 2020 books and starting up sharing our significant abundance. We're starting up our 2021 goals for Growing Grace. We're starting up our Outreach Partnership Grant Program. This is a month of transitions, and it is exciting!

I would usually say more here, but because we'll be sharing these details, stories, and celebrations in bigger ways in the coming weeks, I don't want to spoil them! However, I do want you to know that there is so much happening at Grace; God's ministry work is being done, and the Holy Spirit is moving among us! Be on the lookout for the good news we'll be sharing of the work we've done together in God's name.

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel