

December 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:

I remember what it was like being new here at Grace. I remember how the congregation seemed friendly, and there was always plenty to do, lots to learn. I remember wanting to get up-to-speed as quickly as possible. Several of you reading this helped me with that in a variety of ways, and I am grateful for that. Some of you helped by showing me the way Grace approaches its ministry. Others helped by inviting me to share what insight I already brought, allowing us to collaborate from the start. Sig Huitt introduced me to some people around town, taking me to a few community meetings and making sure I knew the larger picture of Rock Hill's story. Because of all this help, I was in a better position to serve and to lead. The assistance was invaluable – all of it. Last week, I got to pay that forward a little bit.

Pastor Rachel and I shared a lunch with our newest colleague, the Rev. Lucas Caine Crossland. Fr. Lucas is the new rector down the street at Our Saviour. We met at Amelie's and got to hear a bit of his story. He comes to Rock Hill having just served two years in the transitional diaconate in the eastern part of North Carolina. We could relate, in a way, since we came to Rock Hill from North Carolina, too. We got to share with him lots of info about the city and the broader area. We knew great restaurants to recommend, which places he could visit, and so on. Fr. Lucas wanted to know which community groups he might want to join, and we shared some of our thoughts. I was able to connect him with our Campus Minister and a few local leaders, as others had done for me. The more we talked – that day and since – I have been encouraged to realize how much I've come to learn about this place and the people who live here with us. In fact, being able to help someone else in this way has been a real source of joy!

I mention this to you today because I want you to share in this experience. Most of you reading this have been in town longer than I have. Most of you have been members of Grace longer than I have, too. And I have phenomenal news: **new people are still coming!** Even if you have just arrived, you already have valuable information, obtained simply from your personal experiences. I pray you do not keep this resource to yourself! Instead, please be on the lookout for new faces. Maybe they are totally new, or maybe you just haven't met them yet. Either way, please introduce yourself. Strike up a conversation with an unfamiliar person at Grace. We all want the strongest congregation possible, and a key component of that strength will be the impression we give to new people. We are the ones who've been here; that means we must be the ones to 'break the ice' and say hello. Then, you can share with me the joy of finding out how much you already know, and how much you are able to share with a grateful newcomer. Trust me; it's worth the effort!

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Gregg

Pastor's Remarks:

We are now in the post-holiday winter season, which can sometimes feel like a let-down, following the weeks of festivities from Thanksgiving through Christmas. When I finish these remarks, I'll be packing up the last of my office Christmas decorations, which I've left up even beyond the 12 days of Christmas and Epiphany for a little extra joy. But in this 'season after', I'm surprised and glad to say I don't feel the winter blahs quite as strongly as some years. Instead, I'm feeling a bit of space and possibility – Lent comes late this year, which means rather than rushing into the next big season of extra things, we can take a breath and reset.

There are so many good things that will be happening this year, and I am glad to have a few extra weeks of 'normal' to set the foundation – to reorganize, to plan, to check in with people, to feel excited. We're now in our second year of our Strategic Plan, and we will continue with the momentum we built in the last year. Our Stewardship Drive was a huge success – we exceeded our \$750 per week in new giving goal, thanks to the generosity of our Grace members and friends, which means our 2025 ministries are starting off on solid financial footing. Our Youth Group is trying out a new Winter Retreat at Lutheridge, and I'm delighted at how open our kids are to trying something different. We've just shared the suggestion form for 2025 Outreach Grant Partners and I'm looking forward to the new opportunities those suggestions will bring us in our community.

I know God has so many more good things in store for this year of ministry together – some we'll plan and some that will surprise us! I wonder what you're most looking forward to – I'd love to hear about it!

Peace in Christ,
Pr. Rachel