

Associate Rector's Remarks

The year 2007 has been a year of transition! When it began, I was a lay person; I am now an ordained priest in The Episcopal Church. I was once an unemployed seminary student; now I serve as your full-time Associate Rector. The first half of the year, I commuted to the north and east from my home in Jackson to get my work done; and now I commute to the south and west to serve here at Grace Church. I have been stretched in more ways than one!

I am indeed grateful for the opportunity to serve and be a part of the community of Grace Church. I thank you for the warm welcome. Your consistent patience and encouragement have been such a blessing. It is a privilege to walk with you in your daily lives, serve along side you in worship, and work with you in so many varied ways, whether it be painting the parish hall or assisting with the Confirmation service. I am grateful for all the love and support that you shared with me on the day of my Ordination to the Priesthood here in December.

I would also like to extend great gratitude to Fr. Pat Close and Diane Close, for their hospitality and advice, and much thanks to Fr. Nat Elliott and Barbara Elliott for their graciousness at all times. I have great appreciation to Deacon Colleen for her warm welcome, even while she was recovering from her illness—her faith and fortitude is a testimony to the Spirit of God always working in and through us. Last but not least, a special thank you to Sue Getz, Kate Myers, Gretchen Poliero, Bill Lowden, and Michael Leedy for their ever-present help and friendship.

My primary areas of ministry focus here at Grace Church have been EYC, Adult Education, and the Confirmation program, while also serving in worship, preaching, pastoral care, and assisting with the acolytes. It has been a pleasure getting to know the youth of Grace Church, and to work with Brandon Hamilton, Ruthann Johnson, and Shannon Morris. I hope that we can continue to build the youth programs of Grace Church, by involving more youth and expanding the activities offered. We would like to eventually plan a mission trip, and also be more involved on a Diocesan level. As always, we need and encourage parental support of EYC.

The Confirmation program at Grace Church is comprehensive and geared to forming disciples in community. There are education and service hour expectations to be met, and Confirmation classes are a time of community building and learning. The program underwent a few minor changes this year. We have added a monthly Confirmation newsletter. Adult Education, always important in the life of the church, is growing and also trying to reach out to the community around us. The Lecture series is one way in which we are doing that. We hope to develop more programs as the year progresses, so that we can reach more people.

Reaching more people is indeed what the Church is all about—spreading the Gospel message, and inviting more persons to experience the joy of knowing God in Christ. Evangelism may sound like a scary word, but it is what we as disciples are called to do. We can do that in many ways—invite a friend or neighbor to worship or even a social event here at Grace, or encourage your youth to invite a friend to EYC or Grace's Aces. We can also evangelize each other—supporting one another through hard times, sharing your faith story, inviting others to join a committee, becoming a Lay Eucharistic Visitor. As God has blessed each of us, so we are asked to be a blessing to one another, and the larger community.

And just as the recent year was a year of transition for me personally, so it has been a time of transition for Grace Church—and the larger Church—as well. As our society shifts and changes, so will the role of the Church in people’s lives. We need to be ready and willing to meet that challenge, and I believe Grace Church is open to meeting the needs of this now post-Christian world.

May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen us ‘to go forth and make disciples of all nations.’

In peace,
Mother Debbie+