



GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

January 2019

WE COULDN'T WAIT FOR 2019!...

Grace ended its year with a big BANG! We came together to welcome the community at Christmas, and celebrated the beginning of our ninth year with our Friday Gatherings. God was with us all the way.... 114 people fed, entertained, singing, praying and even a little dancing. Dozens of volunteers played roles, and all happened in a joyful and thankful way. Thanks be to God!



Our Fourth Day of Advent was celebrated with anticipation and trust, music and hope. Following our service, and First Calvary's worship, a third church celebrated their first time worshipping at Grace: The Connecticut Myanmar Baptist Church is now a regular at Grace! They are thrilled and so are we.

Our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services were beautiful, particularly the traditional *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* with candles on Monday night, with many who had come to visit family in the States from Germany and other places in Europe. The Night was followed by a special "open doors" breakfast prepared and served by Louisa, Bernie Michel and his wonderful wife Barbara. While the numbers were small I was able to provide two gifts to those who came that had been given to me to be shared with others at the Community Friday celebration.

Wayne Dixon joined us for a small Christmas Day service, but the heavens could hear our words and hearts. Joy to the World – Our Lord Has Come! At 1 PM our new partners, those who worship in Burmese invited Asian congregations to join in their Christmas good fortune to be at Grace. More than 140 came, shared a potluck and were so pleased that the Connecticut Myanmar Baptist Church had found a new home. Prior to this, they were worshipping in houses. It is a small congregation, but it is an energized one!

Before the New Year rang, we celebrated the first Friday Gathering of our 9th year, given that the first was on Christmas Eve. 95 people were in attendance, with a large contingent of people from St. Matthew's to help and the keyboarding of Raymond Brown who had also played a number of times during Friday Gatherings in December, including on Community Christmas Night.

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Pastor's Message.....

Robert

In our lives, we engage with and come to know a large number of people. Some pass by quickly, with scarce a memory. Some we come to know and think about from time to time and others stick inside somewhere, perhaps for purpose, but in any case they remain with us. Robert was just such a person. I cannot recall when I first knew him, but I can tell you that he came to mean something profound to me during my time at Grace.

He walked with a cane. At one point I wondered about why and talked with him about it. He said it was hard for him to walk distances and yet I knew that he wanted to find something and he was searching for it. His humor was precious. He lived alone, and he had had trouble with drugs, family disputes, work and his health. He did have a place to live.

It was on Evergreen, a building near where Walter and Allen live today. I would drive him home from Friday Gatherings and pick him up on Sundays. I wasn't always on time, and he reminded me when I wasn't. We talked a lot by phone. He would be sitting outside waiting... or just inside the door during inclement weather. Robert had a huge sense of humor. He would almost constantly confuse names of people. Not because he didn't know the real names, but because it was one way in which we engaged with joy and mischief. Robert's humor was never mean-spirited or sarcastic. He was full of mischief and it was that aspect of his personality that I came to love.

Robert had regrets, frustrations, and disappointments. For a time he worked as a greeter of some sort at the Chrysalis Center. How he got to and from there was a mystery to me. Probably by bus, or maybe he could walk at that time... for distances. He had trouble with his housing. He didn't like the neighborhood and the landlord was giving him trouble. Given his issues with drugs, he was living in the midst of an active drug-infested part of the city. He wanted to find a new place to live. I offered to help, but he was insistent on doing it himself. He had some financial support, including Section 8, but it seemed that he was getting the run around wherever he went. He knew for some reason that he needed to get out of where he was and he did.

Housing for thousands of people in Hartford is largely problematic. Absentee landlords, like profiteers, care little about their tenants' safety as maximizing their profits appears to be their only purpose. Buildings are often poorly maintained, if not rat infested and dangerous. Robert wanted out with some sense of desperation. I wanted to help.

We were fortunate that often in a moment of need he came to Grace where there were caring people. For as long as Robert allowed, we were part of his journey.

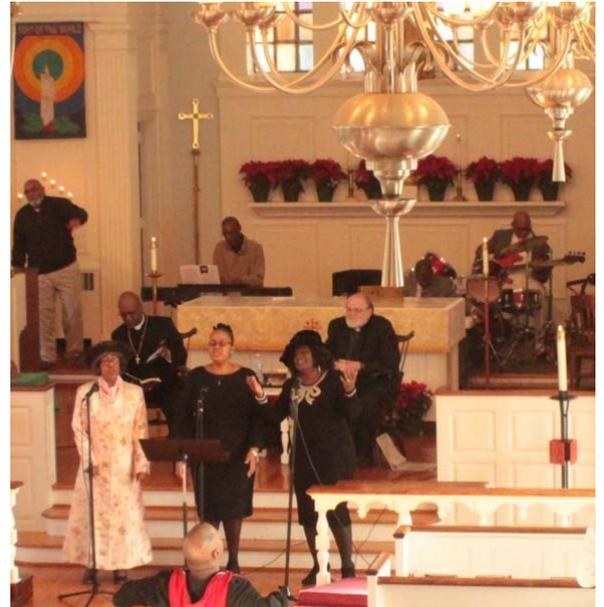
One day he came to me and told me he was moving and had found a new place to live. I was thrilled for him until he told me where he was going. He had found something he could afford on Wethersfield Avenue on the South Side. Another person I came to know and care for had asked for a ride home after a Friday Gathering. She lived in this area and I remember her pointing out to me those buildings that were rife with drugs. She felt unsafe and was accosted for money and witnessed daily drug buying and selling. I was fearful for Robert, but hoped

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If that wasn't enough we ended our year with a joint Service of Unity with First Calvary Baptist Church joining with us in worship that featured both styles, lots of music and a conversational sermon delivered by Pastor Derrick Holloway and myself discussing the meaning of Ephesians 4: 1-6. It was wonderful and seemed to generate interest from both congregations to do it again... In a time where racism has raised its ugly head throughout our country, taking a page from Dr. King, we were not segregated we were together in worshipping our God and giving thanks for each other.

After our joint service, The Connecticut Myanmar Baptist Church worshipped at 3 PM. All was well and all was bright.

If that wasn't enough, we received many gifts towards the end of the year, including one distinctly significant one that bodes well for our continuing ministries going into the New Year. Judy and my friends did it again with an extraordinarily generous gift that will keep the fires going and our building together for another year. The gift will be made available to the church alone. Fresh Start is working on its own development efforts.



2018 was a very difficult and challenging year for the people and communities that we serve, and our own illnesses and losses, and a country that has never been so torn apart in all the

years that I have been alive. What we can and must do as we move forward is to remember that it is our role to use our hands for God's work, and to demonstrate to others a different way of welcoming, loving and treating our neighbors be they strangers from different lands or people whose lives date back to an earlier time when division about slavery sowed some of the seeds that we now contend with... as the rest of the world deals with similar troubles.

Jesus is the light and the truth, and we strive to be his disciples. May we thank God that we are not alone, and that we have ample

direction and support in living our lives in a radically different way from the way so many live their lives today. "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow." May we reflect that light and truth everywhere we are present and everywhere we go!

Happy New Year!

and prayed that he had found a safe place. Soon, Robert was no longer in sight. His calls stopped, he no longer came to church on Fridays or Sundays and I didn't know his whereabouts. I asked about him, and he seemed to have simply dropped out of sight. I wasn't the only person who loved this guy. He was well liked at Grace and brought smiles and laughter wherever he went.

Walter told me last night that Robert had been found in his apartment in the South End on New Year's Eve. He had died of an over-dose, he said. This morning I spent time looking for him in the obituaries, calling his cell phone, looking for proof that he had in fact left us, but hoping that somehow this wasn't true.

The first stage of grief is denial. I don't want to believe that Robert is gone, nor have I forgotten him and his life's struggles. As we begin a New Year at Grace I hope that we might find a way to say a proper goodbye to Robert... perhaps a Memorial Service. His picture is on our wall in the Community Room. He is a part of our "Beloved Community" and always will be. Please join me in prayers for Robert... and his family. May we know with confidence that his search is over and that he is finally at peace. This very moment he could be confusing the names of the Saints that he has joined, and there may well be even greater joy in Heaven. Amen.



Winter Musical Entertainment—featuring David Eberly

Grace's own David Eberly is the featured musician at The Tavern Restaurant at The Waverly Inn, 286 Maple Avenue, Cheshire, CT for the following dates:

- ◆ Friday, January 18th from 7-9:30 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday, February 14th (Valentine's Day) 7-9:30 p.m.
- ◆ Friday, March 22nd from 7-9:30 p.m.

You can call the Inn for more information at 203-272-5998.

Worship Volunteers

A Note from Council President, Barbara Ruhe: Rather than tracking people down on a weekly basis to sign up as Worship Volunteers, we will try to have people sign up for a task on a consistent Sunday.

For example, Barbara Ruhe has signed up to do the 2nd Reading every 1st Sunday. This is to help folks remember that they only need to add the volunteer task to their calendars once rather than trying to remember to add it once in a while.

If you sign up for a Worship Volunteer task and are unable to keep your commitment on a given day, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find a replacement.



Pictures from Grace's Friday Gathering Christmas Dinner on December 21st.



Pictures from Grace's Christmas Eve Service, Friday Gathering Christmas Dinner on December 21st and the Combined Worship Service of Christian Unity with First Calvary on December 30th





Some Good Movies for these Winter Days or Nights

Priceless:

Found on Amazon Prime and at West Hartford Public Library

Based on a compilation of actual accounts of human trafficking of women, the Christian Rock Band, For King and Country put together a moving film story that follows the life of one person and how others get involved in her situation. The premise being that all, but especially women are “priceless,” not for sale at any price. Calling all men to view women, not as sexual objects, but as worthwhile children of God. The story was good, and I enjoyed the trailer of the band’s performance just as much and will probably check it out again just to enjoy the music.

Same Kind of Difference as Me: *On Netflix*

Based on a true story and I think a book, this film follows the experiences of one couple as they work in and with a mission that serves people that are homeless. A woman has a dream and a calling, a husband is challenged as he tries to relate, violence erupts, lives are changed, and friendships are formed. Most of all we get a glimpse of what it means to live out the calling that we have, to see Christ in all people and the power of love that can change lives.

Nancy Urban

January Birthdays

Darrell Urban	1/6
Rebecca Lewis	1/8
David Budhoo	1/13
Bruce Klotz	1/17
Judith Dudek	1/18
Gisela Scoltz	1/18
Madison Boodhoo	1/21
Maya Boodhoo	1/21
Bear McLaren	1/23
Matthew Friedrichs	1/24
Anne Edwards	1/27
Guenther Mamet	1/29

*May you all be blessed
as you celebrate your
special days!*

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary? Contact Dawn at the office, 860-527-7792 or email officeatgrace@sbcglobal.net to update our records.

January Anniversaries

Guenther & Edith Mamet
1/30 59 years



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Our Staff and Council Leadership

The Rev. Rick Kremer, Pastor
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Dorothea Glatte, Lay Minister

Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker
Artist in Residence for Outreach

Barbara Ruhe, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Anna-Marie Potter, Assistant Vice President

Barbara Calogero, Secretary

Dale Eberhardt, Treasurer

Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

Dale Eberhardt, Organist

Walter Scott, Sexton

www.graceistheplace.org

