

Time Together

While We are Apart

Wednesday, April 29, 2020



Good day, dear church communities,

Our animal picture today comes from Frances Callahan (Trinity). Maggie came to Frances and her late husband Tony, when she was a six-month-old rescue dog. Today Maggie is an energetic 17-year-old, who loves treats, walks, and Frances! Frances wrote that when she was a puppy, Maggie got into trouble a lot, but they always forgave her because she was so dear, and so very gentle with the grandchildren. I know I can text Frances early in the morning because Maggie gets her up at dawn! Many thanks, Frances, for sharing sweet Maggie with us!

As we are on the brink of our eighth week of this pandemic, I find I have adapted to working at home, to some extent.....I have reorganized my desk, and the structure of the two times a week Newsletters gives Paula and me some routine. But I do find myself many mornings floundering about trying to figure out where to start the day. This is true on workdays, and on days when I try to grab my day off. Many times, in this peculiar era I have found myself grateful that this “stay at home” time has come in the spring, as the garden and the greening world often center me.

Recently we received some new plants from friends, so now, when I am floundering, I know where to start. The plants need checking and watering. And so, I head out and fill the watering can at the rain barrel, head to each bed, and check whether deer or rabbits or squirrels have been dancing in the fresh soil overnight. With all the rain we have had the plants often don't need much, but I need the focus of knowing where to start. And the needs of the new plants focus me, and the fresh air and the grey or even occasionally blue skies, if not lift, at least rouse my spirits.

We all need to be needed. And the plants are a gentle first need for my day. Maybe yours is making the coffee for your spouse, or feeding the dog or cat, watering the house plants, or texting a relative just to say good morning. We all need a helping focus to start our day, to get us on our



path of offering some small bit of God's love into the world; always true but even more so in this time of so much suffering and anxiety for all. You don't need to start with a difficult helping task; texting your most cantankerous relative might make it your first, and last helping task of the day! The plants are quiet and just thirsty, so I'll start there!

Now, onward to a little more, “Time Together.” Megan

Prayer Notes:

We will include our prayer lists in each Sunday Newsletter. Please continue to let us know of folks you would like to have on our prayer lists.

Notes for this week:

- Chuck McGrath Chuck is settling in with home care. Please continue to keep Chuck, Alexa, and Malena in your prayers.
- George Clowser is on the SMWC prayer list. George is the son of Mary Ann Olsen at SMWC, and he is a UPS driver in the county. Mary Ann asked for prayers for George as his work necessitates much interaction with the public in this time of COVID. Please keep George, and all our essential workers, in your prayers during this so difficult and concerning time.
- Our healthcare workers are on all our hearts. Please keep them, and their families, in your prayers.

April and May Birthdays and Anniversaries

St. Mary's Whitechapel Birthdays: Betty Thornton, April 23; Sue Ramsey, April 24; Sparky Marsh, April 25 ; Karen Woodruff, May 4; Jean DeFilippo, May 12; Ernie Greene, May 13; Chuck McGrath, May 17; Randy Romaine, May 25

Anniversaries: Bill & Jannine Pennell, April 5; Lucy & Warren Hottle, May 10

Trinity Birthdays: Nancy Chilton, April 7th; Madeline Withers, April 11th; Catherine Chilton Ford, April 15th; Meredith Brent, April 16th; Bill Hayden, April 20th; Diane Smith, April 21st; Sandra Walker, April 22nd; Emmett Christopher, April 23rd; Alexandra Cornwell, April 23rd; Carter Christopher, April 25th; Melissa Dunaway, April 25th; Elizabeth Anne Kellum, April 25th; Joanna Hyde, April 27th; Sarah Wells Pollard, May 2nd; Allen Cornwell, May 3rd; Karen Woodruff, May 4th; Jonathan Chilton, May 11th; Hope Hayden, May 11th; Milton Kingsbury, May 13th; Owen Christopher, May 22nd; Spencer Cammarata, May 24th; Jenny Dunaway, May 24th

Anniversaries: Janet & Michael Christopher, April 12th; Carter & Cheryl Christopher, May 19th; Janet & Jay Davenport, May 20th



Announcements

Many of you have told me how much you are enjoying Glenn's "Thoughts from the Organ Bench" column in the Newsletter, and the links to hear the hymn of the day! First, I wanted to share Glenn's email address so you can connect with him: Glenn.courtney49@gmail.com. Second, I wanted to let you know that, if you are looking for other links to Glenn's music selections, check out the SMWC website: stmaryswhitechapel.org. Glenn keeps a link to a hymn or song there too. Music is so good for our souls always, and especially in these stressful days. Many thanks, Glenn!

"Zooming Coffee Hour" was fun this past Sunday! We went from seven folks to 14 attendees, so the chatter got loud occasionally, but as Sharon Gill said, "I told other people about this because I feel so much better after being here!" We will continue to meet Sundays at 3pm. Text, call or email me if you want to join us, and I'll send you the invitation Sunday afternoon. (My cell number is 804-477-5515) And if you would like to join us, but are not signed up for Zoom, Ellen Tracey from Trinity and Sharon and Richard Gill from SMWC are willing to help anyone get on Zoom. Ellen can be contacted at: 804-436-2371 and The Gills can be reached at: 804-462-9939.

For the season of Easter, I will be posting a video each Sunday, focused on the Gospel for the week. The videos will be available on the Trinity website and on our Facebook pages.

Washington National Cathedral continues to offer beautiful and moving worship daily. They can be found at cathedral.org.

Please let me know if you are in need of help with getting groceries or other necessities. Call, text, or email and I'll connect you with a volunteer.

Many thanks for continuing to pay your pledges as you are able in these difficult financial times. And many thanks to those who have been able to donate to the Rector's Discretionary Funds.

You can continue to mail pledges and donations to Rector's Discretionary Fund to each church:

Trinity Church
PO Box 208
Lancaster, VA 22503

SMWC
5940 Whitechapel Rd
Lancaster, VA 22503



Thoughts from the Organ Bench

Here is the story behind the hymn "Amazing Grace." It's probably on everyone's most favorite list. Written almost two and a half centuries ago in 1772, the words for the beloved song were born from the heart, mind and experiences of the Englishman John Newton. Knowing the story of John Newton's life as a slave trader and the journey he went through before writing the hymn will help to understand the depth of his words and his gratefulness for God's truly amazing grace.

Having lived through a rather unfortunate and troubled childhood (his mother passed away when he was just six years old), Newton spent years fighting against authority, going so far as trying to desert the Royal Navy in his twenties. Later, abandoned by his crew in West Africa, he was forced to be a servant to a slave trader but was eventually rescued. On the return voyage to England, a violent storm hit and almost sank the ship, prompting Newton to begin his spiritual conversion as he cried out to God to save them from the storm.

Upon his return, however, Newton became a slave ship master, a profession in which he served for several years. Bringing slaves from Africa to England over multiple trips, he admitted to sometimes treating the enslaved individuals abhorrently. In 1754, after becoming violently ill on a sea voyage, Newton abandoned his life as a slave trader, the slave trade, and seafaring, altogether, wholeheartedly devoting his life to God's service.

He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1764 and became quite popular as a preacher and hymn writer, penning some 280 hymns, among them the great "Amazing Grace," which first appeared in the *Olney Hymns*, printed by Newton and poet/fellow writer William Cowper. It was later set to the popular tune NEW BRITAIN in 1835 by William Walker.

In later years, Newton fought alongside William Wilberforce, leader of the parliamentary campaign to abolish the African slave trade. He described the horrors of the slave trade in a tract he wrote supporting the campaign and lived to see the British passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807.

And now, we see how lyrics like:

*I once was lost,
but now am found,
Was blind
but now I see.*

and

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

carry a much deeper meaning than a sinner's mere gratitude. Close to death at various times and blind to reality at others, Newton would most assuredly would not have written "Amazing Grace" if not for his tumultuous past. And many of us would then be without these lovely words that so aptly describe our own relationship with Christ and our reliance on God's grace in our lives:

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

Modern interpretations

Those who have read Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic African American novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, may remember that Tom sings three verses of "Amazing Grace," including one verse not written by Newton, which is now traditionally sung as the final verse:

*When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise,
Than when we first begun.*

A movie named for the song was made in 2006 that tells the story of William Wilberforce's fight for abolition, with Albert Finney playing the repentant former slave trader John Newton. The song was used at marches during the civil rights movement and gained popularity among those protesting the Vietnam War. Over the years, musicians and singers from Elvis Presley and Andrea Bocelli to Celine Dion, Aretha Franklin, Destiny's Child, Judy Collins and Leann Rhimes have performed this quintessential song.

"Amazing Grace", with the words written by Newton and joined with "New Britain," the melody most currently associated with it, appeared for the first time in Walker's shape note tunebook *Southern Harmony* in 1847.

Source: <https://www.ocp.or>

Please enjoy the following performance of "Amazing Grace" by Rosemary Siemens.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxuSdBDib-s>

Reflection

I subscribe to a daily devotional offered by the United Church of Christ (UCC) called Still Speaking, referring to God still speaking in our lives today. The authors are a wide variety of clergy and laity in the UCC. Our reflection today comes from Rev. Talitha Arnold, Senior Minister of the UCC Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her reflection is entitled, “With a Voice of Thanksgiving,” and reflects on a verse from the Book of Jonah.

“But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you.” - Jonah 2:9 (NRSV)

Jonah spoke those words from the belly of a whale. He’d been inside the creature for three days and three nights, after being thrown off a ship bound for Tarshish. Jonah wanted to escape from God’s call to go to Nineveh, so he tried to sail away from God. But as Psalm 139 affirms, even if Jonah took the “wings of the morning and settled at the farthest limits of the sea,” even there God’s hand would lead him, and God’s right hand hold him fast.

By his third day, Jonah had learned that truth. In the utter darkness inside the whale, he prayed: “I called to the Lord out of my distress, and God answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried and you heard my voice” (2:2).

Even as the waters closed in over him, the weeds wrapped around him, and his life ebbed away, Jonah remembered God with gratitude. Still in the depths of the sea. Still in crisis. Still encased in whatever mess might be in a whale’s stomach, Jonah prayed “with the voice of thanksgiving.”

There is no telling what mess and depths you or me or this world might be in today. Wherever we are, may we—like Jonah—remember God is still with us and still hears our cries. May that truth give us the voice of thanksgiving.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for being with us in this time and all times. Amen.