

Grace Notes

One New Episcopal Church From Two Historic Parishes

Volume 5 Number 11

December 2025

Happy December, Beloved. And happy Advent!

I don't know about you, but I am especially grateful for Advent this year. I need it! How about you? Advent, as you certainly know, is the season when we consciously slow down, as we begin our pilgrimage to the crèche and the reenactment of the birth of the Christ on December 25th. The ironic humor in that statement is that December is one of the busiest seasons within the Church, and, as you shall see in this newsletter, Grace has something going on nearly every Saturday and Sunday in December. Avail yourself of the things that nurture you!

Nonetheless, despite this irony, when we begin Advent, we not only begin a new liturgical year, but we also start in the darkness, as our forebears did, waiting for the fulfillment of the promises of God. We remember what it must have been like to wait for the yet unfulfilled coming of the Messiah, and we begin our pilgrimage from December 1 to December 25, the birthday of Jesus the Christ.

I, the world, and perhaps you, too, are desperately in need of the Messiah this year.

I am! There is so much moral and spiritual darkness in our country and in our world this Advent. It's chilling. Deeply saddening. Profoundly worrisome. We and the world desperately need the revelation and light of Christ. We need the wisdom and comfort of this Prince of Peace, this Lamb of God, this true King and Leader, who will be born in swaddling clothes, in poverty, in a manger – an expression of the Holy Trinity's solidarity with us and for us all.

How emotionally apt this year is one of the great Advent hymns of the Church!

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo - ple free;
2 Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;
3 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king,

from our fears and sins re - lease us, let us find our rest in thee.
dear de - sire of ev - ery na - tion, joy of ev - ery long - ing heart.
born to reign in us for ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

One of the relevant saints for Grace this Advent is the poor man from Assisi, St. Francis. Are you aware that St. Francis created the first crèche in 1223 in Greccio, Italy? In a cave outside that city, he assembled a live ox and donkey, put hay in a manger, and regularly celebrated the Holy Eucharist in that unconventional and unexpected place so local people could experience the Incarnation in a more direct, easy, visceral way. It was radically innovative even to be outside the church buildings and was a kind of 13th century devotional and sacramental Door Dash. It obviously caught on.

Part of what Grace is praying and meeting to discern as part of our ongoing Grace New Futures activity is how we too can bring and live out the Gospel in Ossining in a contemporary and visceral way, so locals can experience the Good News of God in Christ in fresh ways in their lives. While we shall have no New Futures meetings together in December because of all the Advent activity, we will continue our work together again in January. We will continue to seek to answer the primary discernment question together: “What does God want Grace to do and be in 2026 and beyond?”

I suggest that this Advent we pray often the great prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Below is a complete, unabridged translation in English from the earliest known publication of the prayer. Try praying it. The unfamiliarity and pacing of some of the prayer verses may make it paradoxically more profitable to pray it intentionally, and not just by rote or unconsciously. In any case, the prayer speaks both to the dark times we find ourselves in as well as to Grace’s ongoing discernment of God’s will for Grace:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Lord, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in forgiving that one is forgiven,
it is in dying that one awakens to eternal life.

We, the world, and Ossining are in deep need of this prayer and the saving Gospel values it intones, especially in these days of moral deceit, depravity, and darkness. May we not fail to live out these values, following Christ creatively and effectively in our day, as St. Francis found creative and life-giving ways to follow Christ in his day. Christ expects no less. Indeed, later in 2026 from St. Matthew's Gospel (the Gospel we will be reading this liturgical year), we shall hear Jesus command:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16; NRSV).

Finally, in our struggle and hard work, let us not forget some of the final, encouraging words of Jesus to us, his followers:

"I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (John 16:33; NRSV).

Happy Advent, Beloved. We have much important work to continue together in 2026. This Advent, though, let's slow down emotionally and give ourselves permission for the joy of Christ's birth to renew us with hope, comfort, and direction. May this Advent be for us a time of emotional sustenance and renewal, as we move from the darkness of the world pre-Christ to the joyous revelation of the love of God in Christ. Thanks be to God!

With love and prayers,

Faithfully,

Fr. Hal+Faithfully,

Fr. Hal+



DEACON'S MESSAGE BREAKING THE SILENCE

November 30th was the first Sunday in Advent and it was also Breaking the Silence Sunday. Every year, the Episcopal Church asks that anyone who is preaching or leading speak about the important issues of gender-based violence, domestic violence, and how we can work to end violence. I included some perspective in my reflection for Advent 1, but I am including more here. The National Church provided a "toolkit" to use that had information, statements from our bishops and advocates, and passages from scripture.

One fact really hit me. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men in the United States will experience severe intimate partner violence during their lifetimes. This means that people in our workplaces and neighborhoods and congregations are suffering in silence. The statistics are similar for child abuse: 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 10 boys will experience some time of violation.

Our Diocesan Bishop, Matthew Heyd, noted in his comments that Break the Silence Sunday was established by General Convention and calls upon the entire Episcopal Church to name and address the reality of gender-based violence within our communities and to support survivors through prayer, advocacy, and concrete action.

The themes in our lessons and readings for the First Sunday of Advent stressed Isaiah's vision of "beating swords into plowshares," and Matthew's call to "stay awake." What does this mean for us? What can we do? To start, we need to continue our vital ministry of creating a safe space and a warm embrace for those who come to us. Grace's welcoming and hospitality ministry is outstanding. We must always remember that a feeling of being safe can be a lifesaver to someone who is suffering. We must also keep talking about these important issues.

There are signs in the restrooms on both campuses that list the name and number of the local Domestic Violence Helpline. They are subtle, private, but effective. Providing information is a good first step. Continuing the conversation is vital. Anyone who has suffered as a child or an adult needs to know that there is help, there is understanding, and "you are not alone." For more information, please check out these additional resources:

Futures Without Violence

www.futureswithoutviolence.org

RAINN

www.rainn.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

www.thehotline.org

VAWNET

www.vawnet.org

National Network to End Domestic Violence

www.nnedv.org

--Deacon Jean Marie



OUR UPCOMING SERVICES

December 7	10:30 AM	Holy Eucharist (Trinity Campus)	Advent 1
December 14	10:30 AM	Holy Eucharist (St. Paul's Campus)	Advent 2
December 21	10:30 AM	Holy Eucharist (Trinity Campus)	Advent 3
December 21	4:00 PM	Festival of Lessons and Carols (Trinity Campus)	Advent 3
December 24	4:30 PM	Holy Eucharist (St. Paul's Campus)	Christmas Eve
December 24	7:30 PM	Holy Eucharist (Trinity Campus)	Christmas Eve
December 25	10:30 AM	Holy Eucharist (Christ Church San Marcos, Tarrytown)	Christmas Day
December 28	10:30 AM	Morning Prayer (Trinity Campus)	Advent 1

All Sunday services are live streamed to our YouTube channel. You can find our recorded services there, and on our Facebook page after the service is over. The links are:

YouTube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP1qGAuJlIxWU8Z_ucCKEGA

Grace's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/graceossining/>

AdventWord

30 de noviembre - 25 de diciembre 2025

AdventWord

November 30 - December 25
30 de noviembre - 25 de diciembre

2025

30 Again Volver	1 Said Decir	3 Quietness Sosiego	4 Reveling Glotonerías	5 Gratify Satisfacer	6 Day Día
7 Heed Escuchar	8 Counsel Consejo	10 Equity Equidad	11 Encouragement Ánimo	12 Written Escrito	13 Brood Crías
14 Unquenchable Inextinguible	15 Recompense Retribución	17 Highway Camino	18 Cleansed Limpio	19 Robes Ropas	20 Truly De verdad
21 Deep Profundo	22 Declared Declarar	23 Mother Madre	24 Angel Ángel	25 Endless Sin fin	

AdventWord is a free inspirational online Advent calendar featuring a daily prompt word selected from the Advent Sunday Lectionary readings. Followers receive a daily meditation and image inspired by the day's word, and are invited to share their own personal reflections, art, poetry, or other creative expression.

As we await the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we invite you to find daily moments of reflection to help you stay connected to your faith, to others, and to God.

Join our community of prayer this Advent season. Sign up for email updates and daily meditations at AdventWord.org



AdventWord is an offering of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church. Find more inspiration and opportunities for spiritual growth at forwardmovement.org.

AdventWord.org



[Click here](#) to receive the daily meditation during Advent via email.

It's not too late! Advent is also a wonderful time to start or renew a habit of daily scripture reading. *Forward Day by Day* makes it easy, with daily scripture listings and reflections, prayer, and action.

Pick one up and open it to the day...and your new Advent habit begins!

WARDEN'S REPORT

IT'S DECEMBER ALREADY!

As our New Futures Discernment work continues, it was very interesting to see how many other parishes are experiencing the same trends we are here at Grace. At the 249th Annual Diocesan Convention, it was clear that many of our fellow churches are facing declining Average Sunday Attendance statistics, significant expenses for deferred maintenance over the years, and the fiscal reality of not knowing how to continue covering their projected operational costs in the years ahead. Bishop Heyd and Bishop Shin have both been very transparent about recent deconsecrated churches, merging parishes, and new modes of mission, worship, and metrics in reporting our efforts in our Parochial Reports. Even the formula for annual financial apportionments which are paid to the Diocese by all member churches was a huge topic at the meeting. Clearly Grace is not alone in this new landscape which is affecting many faith communities; we are on the right track in our discernment work!



We are still thinking about our Friendsgiving; and are so thankful for the amazing success and record-setting turnout (60 guests) for this year's Turkey & Trivia event! There was so much love, support, and joy in the room and our new guests felt the happy vibe in the Parish Hall too! Our various gifted chefs in our parish who brought food & sweet desserts and the behind-the-scenes talents of our Hospitality Team made all the magic possible! Thanks again and God bless everyone for joining us, bringing their friends, and creating a safe, welcoming, and healing space for those who may be navigating the holiday season with some challenges this year and those who just want to eat, drink, and be merry with their Grace Family!

This December we have lots to do! We need volunteers to be available for the greening of our sanctuaries, we need buffet foods/confections for our Lessons & Carols reception, and those who can remind us which organizations in town may still need winter clothes, non-perishable food items, and/or holiday gifts for their families. (We will also need some helpers to assist me to clean/wipe our Books of Common Prayers at Trinity campus after our Sunday service there on December 7th. Please email Cecilia (address below) if you are available. This job should be done in 1 hour.)

Finally, for those who are called, who may have more free time, or some new perspectives to share with the leadership of Grace in 2026, please feel free to contact any of us or Fr. Hal about joining the Vestry.

As we look forward to making progress in 2025 and beyond, Grace needs to be open, honest, direct, and focused in our work together to meet the challenges which lie ahead. And we need everyone to continue to be engaged and active participants in this great and dynamic experiment of our merged church. Thank you for your trust, faith, and support in our work together in discerning our vision for Grace's future!

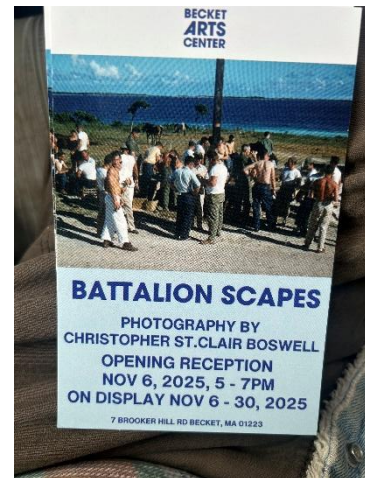
Wardens: Graham Gulian (2026) ggulian@gmail.com
Cecilia Quintero (2027) cquintero1506@gmail.com

Vestry Members: Ann Barringer Spaeth (2027) abspaeth55@gmail.com
Alison Ford (2028) alisonford@msn.com
Milton Kerr (2027) mkdj46@yahoo.com
Jo Ann McGrath (2026) mcgrathinator@gmail.com
Maribeth Osgood (2028) mbosgood@outlook.com
Kate Pendzuk (2026) katependzuk@gmail.com

GREETINGS FROM THE NORTH!

From Terri Roman

I recently reached out to Chris Boswell, Jr. to inquire about our dear friend, Chris Boswell Sr. and he sent me these wonderful pictures. As many of you know, he went to live with his son after an extended period of time in a nursing rehab here in Ossining. He is doing well and will be happy to hear that I'm able to share these pictures of him and the reception for his photography exhibit.



WE CERTAINLY DID ENJOY OURSELVES IN NOVEMBER!!

ANNIVERSARY LUNCH



FRIENDSGIVING



NEW FUTURES NEIGHBORHOOD LUNCH



GRACE GRIEF GROUP

We will be meeting on Saturday, December 13th* and December 27th in the Family Room at the St. Paul's Campus of Grace Church – 40 Ganung Drive, Ossining, NY.

Please note that Fr. Hal will be leading a Quiet Advent Service immediately following our meeting on December 13th at 11:30 AM. We are all invited in this holiday season to remember and honor those whom we have lost. Feel free to bring any photographs or small items which remind you of your loved ones.

Dear Heavenly Father,

This holiday season, we lift up your children who are nursing fresh, worldly wounds. We pray that you may slowly heal their scars and restore gratitude in their weary hearts, once more. Please remind us to always be mindful of those around us—whom we know and do not—as we turn to you to prepare ourselves for the upcoming holiday season.

In Your Name, we pray. Amen.



"Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up."

Romans 15:2

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:13



Shared with permission from *Gracefully Woven* by Elizabeth Spenner

THE OLD MILL SINGERS
PRESENTS



Holiday Magic
winter 2025

directed by Nell Macdonald

December 6th at 5pm
December 7th at 3pm

The Julie Harris Theater
Clear View School
480 Albany Post Road
Briarcliff Manor

Adults and Seniors, Pre-Sale Tickets: \$20
Adults and Seniors, Tickets at the Door: \$25
Tickets for Kids 12 and under: \$5

oldmillsingers.org



Taize is an ecumenical evening prayer service that originates from the inter-denominational Christian community in Taize, France. Taizé prayer centers around the cross and consists of mantra-like singing of simple songs focused on reconciliation and healing. This style of prayer has been adopted by many churches throughout the world. This sacred candlelight service includes beautiful, seasonal chants and the reading of a psalm and gospel passage, followed by a generous time of silence for personal reflection. We end with intercessions for personal, local, and global needs.

Come celebrate this sacred tradition of Advent Taize Prayer at Mariandale in the Chapel, Presented by staff of Center at Mariandale and Anne Holland, a singer, song writer, and church musician.

Join us on **Thursday, December 11 at 5:30 PM.**

It will also be livestreamed, if you are not able to attend in person.

Please register online so we know you are planning to attend, either in the Chapel or as a virtual event. [Click here to register.](#)

A Festival of Nine
LESSONS
&
CAROLS



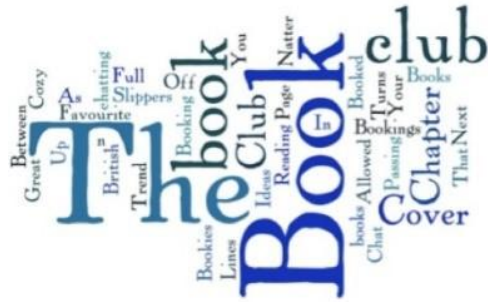
Featuring the choirs of
All Saints' Episcopal Church, Briarcliff Manor
and Grace Episcopal Church, Ossining

Fill your heart with the joyous sounds of the season!

Free admission. All are welcome! Reception to follow in the Parish Hall.

Sunday, December 21, 4pm

Grace Episcopal Church, Trinity Campus
7 South Highland Avenue
Ossining, NY 10562



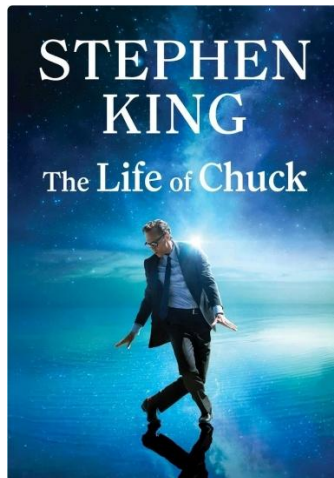
It's time to check our 2026 calendars for our TBC Champagne 🍷 Toast after we've discussed our assigned book! Please let me know which date is best via email, cquintero1506@gmail.com

Sunday, January 18th or Sunday, February 1st?

TIA!

And the book we'll be discussing, *The Life of Chuck* (107pgs) by Stephen King, asks the reader to consider our impact on others, our loved ones, and the universe during our lifetime. The film version should still be available on a streaming platform, so there is a short cut for those who don't have reading time. I loved both! So check it out!

Cecilia Quintero



DECEMBER EVENTS



- 6 Daisy Grace Ward's Baptism (11:00 AM, St. Paul's Campus)
- 6 Hospitality Steering Committee (11:00 AM, Trinity Campus)
- 13 Grief Group meets (10:00 AM, St. Paul's Campus Family Room)
- 13 Quiet Advent Service (11:30 AM, St. Paul's Campus)
- 17 Vestry Meeting (7:00 PM, St. Paul's Campus)
- 21 Lessons and Carols Service and Reception (4:00 PM, Trinity Campus)
- 24 Christmas Eve Family Service (4:00 PM, St. Paul's Campus)
- 24 First Mass of Christmas (7:30 PM, Trinity Campus)
- 25 Christmas Day Service (10:30 AM, Christ Church San Marcos, Tarrytown)
- 27 Grief Group meets(10:00 AM, St. Paul's Campus Family Room)

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Diahann C. Malcolm	1	Jan Greene	17
Zoe Grace Parker	3	Carissa Paige Wagner	20
Alexander Sergey Mahlau	10	Stephen Okyne	24
Christopher D. Boswell	11	Lisa Marie Liberti	25
Kathryn Brocchi	11	Ann Barringer Spaeth	25
Elfreda Okyne	12	Janet L. Hughes	27
Joan Holsten	13	JoAnn McGrath	28
Karen Pasioka	14		

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Christine and John Schuler	2
Carolyn Black and Arthur Hightower	28



CLERGY

The Rev. Hal Roark, Priest-in-Charge

The Rev. Jean Marie Angelo, Deacon

Janine Thwaite, Deacon Postulant

VESTRY

Graham Gulian, Warden

Cecilia Quintero, Warden

Jo Ann McGrath, Clerk

Ann Barringer Spaeth

Maribeth Osgood

Alison Ford

Kate Pendzuk

Milton Kerr

STAFF

Beth Pollack, Treasurer

Tina Farrell and Tamsen Hernández, Parish Administrators

Suji Jung, Music Director

Katherine Pendzuk, Verger

Megan Whalen, Bookkeeper

Anthony Sena, Sexton, St. Paul's Campus

Pablo Montoya, Sexton, Trinity Campus

MISSION STATEMENT

To love God is a call to action. Strengthened by prayer, worship, and study, Grace Church embraces and serves all people, the earth, and every living thing.