

**2008**  
**June 8<sup>th</sup> Homily**

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart; be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

Good morning. It is hard not to notice that there are many wonderful things taking place here at Grace. In order for you to know about all of these things, The Vestry thought it would be good for me as your Senior Warden not only to touch on these items in a *Grace Notes* report, but also to speak to you from the pulpit. I would like to speak about these things in the context of the word “balance”. When one has balance in one’s life between work, home and extra curricular activities, one can say that everything is right in the world. I am the first one to say that my life is not always balanced. Workdays get longer, home time shrinks and extra curricular activities expand. Our community here at Grace is also not always in balance. During this past year, we have been juggling the Restoration Project with its changes to our routine as well as changes in our staff and working on our budget striving for a balanced budget. I have found that if I take on too much then usually it will get done, but it will not be my best work. I strive to do my best work, so I, as well as the parish, need to make decisions on what we can do and what others can do to help us. Balance.

The Vestry Retreat in March was led by a consultant in parish organization who helped the Vestry to focus our attention on different types of leadership as well as how leadership relates to different sizes of churches. In particular, how we can work to make Grace a better organized and easier place to operate. Grace Church is a happening place. We have on average 250 parishioners attending services on Sundays. Sunday school enrollment is around 100. We have a diverse list of programs and offerings on the weekends as well as during the week. We have a full complement of staff with clergy, parish administrator, bookkeeper, musical director, organist and sexton. We also have 6 Commissions, Liturgy, Parish Life, Pastoral Care, Outreach, Stewardship and Christian Formation and Education. The organizational charts would amaze most people. What I have found though, is that while we have this robust church, we tend to expect a great deal from a very small number of people. Sometimes it feels like we behave in the same way the crowds do in today's gospel. If we just touch the hem of that person's garment, all will be well. Or, if we can get Rob or another member of the clergy to make this visit, or make an appearance here or there, then and only then can we say the church is present and fulfilling its mission. But, the fact is, we are **all** called to exercise a priestly ministry in Christ. The Rector's job is to develop the ministry of all of us as a church, not to replace our ministry to and with each other. When Rob was first called to Grace, I was on the Vestry and

at that time, we pledged that we collectively needed to work with Rob and share in the leadership to make Grace a thriving, healthy and wonderful community. Our thoughts were in the right place. We have grown and are thriving, but some of our follow through in regards to sharing leadership may have missed its mark. We have not reached balance. Sometimes Rob overreaches and jumps into places of ministry that can and more appropriately be done by the laity. And sometimes we expect him to, and get disappointed when, he can't fulfill these expectations. The result is that we are weaker and less effective in our mission to be the mature Body of Christ in the world. This is the reason why Rob, Margaret, Anne, Susan, Ann and the clergy at Grace Church have chosen not to be referred to as "Father" or "Mother." And I, for one, am grateful for that.

The membership of a church of our size needs to rise to take more responsibility for daily tasks. Long gone are the days when the parish could expect the rector or his or her staff to serve as "private chaplains" for 100 or so parishioners. If we are to grow into the church of the size we already are, lay leaders need to be selected, trained, supported and empowered to set up and run the programs of the church. As spiritual leaders, the rector and his staff are to equip and develop the lay leadership, so that we can mature and become more effective in being Christ's presence to each other and in the world.

We have done this to a point, by setting up the organizational structure, but we still look to Rob to be involved in most things, making it just too much for one person to handle. For instance, when a homeless or intoxicated person in need shows up at our doors on Christmas Eve or Sunday morning, it seems that the first impulse is to find Rob to give assistance or pastoral care. Are we not members of the body of Christ? Believe it or not, Rob's cloak doesn't have any more power than ours!

The Vestry has committed themselves to changing this pattern and has reinstated the vestry liaison positions to the commissions or teams, as we would like to call them as we move forward. Team chairs will now have a resource to help them in making decisions. Vestry liaisons will also act as conduits back to the whole Vestry for mission critical discussions. Our team chairs are people who give freely of their time and energy to help in a leadership role and we need to and have empowered them to lead their teams and we support them. I would like to thank those Team Chairs who are present here this morning. Please stand. Outreach: Patrick Kelly and Chris Hoffmann, Stewardship: Jane Buckloh and Doug Adler, and Parish Life: Katie Schendel. I can tell you that we are looking for some additional people to step forward to co-chair Christian Formation and Education as well as the Pastoral Care team. Vestry Liaisons are there to help and I hope we will have these key leadership positions filled soon. Team chairs have been asked to develop one goal for this

next year that would put our mission into reality. Our mission is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. Some of these goals, which the Vestry has heard are: for Outreach, their goal for the Parish is to sponsor a school in Haiti as a visible sign of our involvement with the Millennium Development Goals. Stewardship has made it their goal to not only increase stewardship, but to plan a stewardship retreat in the fall. I am sure we will be hearing more about these goals and others shortly

We are blessed with a team of clergy who see their vocation as raising up and equipping the laity to be the principal ministers of the church as the Prayer Book bids us. We are to “Represent Christ and his church; to bear witness to him wherever we may be; and, according to the gifts given to us, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take our place in the life, worship and governance of the Church.”

I just mentioned the need for parishioners to help fill some co-chair team positions, but we also need to make sure that we have additional people working with our team chairs on their goals to further our ministry. In order to help support more volunteers, Steve McKelvey has stepped forward with the desire to coordinate the process of linking newcomers, as well as parishioners who have not yet become involved, with their areas of interest in one of our teams. In order for him to do this, we will be seeing classifieds in the bulletin offering particular volunteer opportunities that we have available at any one

time. If one grabs your attention, please follow through and become involved. This will help everyone get involved and hopefully allow new ideas to grow. As we take on more responsibility and ownership in the mission of Grace, we will become more fully into the one we behold and receive when we share Christ's communion for the life of the world.

Let me turn for a moment to some bricks and mortar and speak about the Restoration Project. I can say that in spite of some recent code compliance issues that we have had to face, we are working towards completion. I would like to say that we are still on schedule for early summer, but as I have said before things happen that may make us need to adjust the schedule. We are doing everything possible to keep the project moving. We still have a gap to make up in funding the project. I hope you were able to see the PowerPoint presentation during the Pentecost Picnic, which showed how far we have come from our old Connector and covered walkway to the new hall and cloister that we will soon be using. Stewardship will be discussing how we might make up this difference, so that we can keep our facility debt free, while still keeping in mind that the parish has been very generous with their giving. There are many options for everyone to help fund this gap. We are still selling bricks in the All Souls' Walkway in the cloister. Just 108 of the 2000 bricks have been purchased, so we still have room for your brick. There are also naming opportunities as well as mite boxes to fill. While a loan has

allowed us to keep the project moving toward completion, it would be great if we could retire the debt without paying much interest.

When I became your Senior Warden two years ago, my hope was that we would be able to have balanced budgets. While this did not happen last year, for many reasons, we are so close this year. I am sure that with your help we will finally be able to obtain this goal. If you have missed a payment or forgotten, we are approaching our current end of year on June 30, so please send us your balances so we will have a balanced budget. The Vestry has already discussed that our goal should be to try and pay back the money from our endowment that we have taken to balance previous budgets. While this is admirable, we need to balance this goal with other needs such as the Old Rectory boiler replacement that we need to find a way to fund before winter. I know that we will find the right balance and not only have you, the Parish, been generous, we have also worked hard, Vestry and Finance Committee as well as all those involved in the budget process to save and trim costs where possible. This has not been easy. There have been serious cuts in expenses and careful reassessments of our staffing arrangements. I thank everyone for their efforts.

Grace Church continues to be the beacon of light and a source of spiritual life and community for even more people than we know. You would be surprised to know how many people; both locally and even nationally, rely

on us to keep our doors open, as well as our hearts and minds. In the midst of our activity and our busy-ness, we still strive to hold fast to the center of our life in God. There we find peace, joy, and a sense of the holy in all we do. Please keep this place in your prayers, and perhaps when asked to serve in a new way, give prayerful consideration to say yes.

God is good. And in God, the three-in-one, we can find a life-giving balance for our lives, individually, together, and in the world. God has carried us on a long journey. May we continue with God and each other as we continue on this exciting journey together....in the name of the Creator, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Christopher V. Freitag

Senior Warden