

GRACE HAPPENINGS

THE NEWSLETTER OF

GRACE MISSION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

... A TRANSFORMATIVE MINISTRY OF THE FORGOTTEN ...

HELP • HOPE • HEALING

LENT 2016

Words of Grace

The Rev. Amanda Nickles, Vicar

Dear Ministry Partners:

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Grace Mission throughout 2015. We have so much to be thankful for through all of our volunteers, sponsors and donors. We had 20,000+ volunteer hours this past year!

You contributions this winter season helped us give away many coats, blankets, sweaters, and sweatshirts along with numerous sweatpants, pants, winter caps and scarves, hygiene products and much more. Throughout the year we had four free Health Clinics and we were able to give out 40 free flu shots this year. We continue to do free showers three times per week. We also provide free laundry services (1 load of laundry) to those that attend our worship services. We gave away a total of \$3,020.00 (\$10.00 each) Goodwill vouchers to those in need through our once a month free clothing giveaway. These vouchers provide the opportunity for a person to go to Goodwill and get the clothing item(s) they need if we do not have it available at the clothing giveaway. Thank you for your donations and please continue to clean out your closets and donate to Grace Mission.

Each month, through our One Campaign/Mobile Grocery we were able to deliver wholesome and nutritious food in the Springfield Apts./Joe Louis HUD Housing Project to over 2,185 people with over half of that number being children. Many churches participated in the One Campaign and we are very grateful for your support!

Grace Mission continued to support the **Brehon House** (for pregnant women who need shelter and help during pregnancy). We delivered baby clothing and other baby items that they needed.

We have walked the neighborhood each month through our Water-Walk and Adopt-A-Lot ministry – picking up trash, handing out cold water to those in need and praying for others. We continue to raise money, through our outreach basket each Sunday, for many agencies that help the poor and homeless populations in Leon County.

We served over 52,000 hot nutritious meals in 2015. A new record for us!

As a worshipping community within the Episcopal Church, we continued to provide Morning Prayer, we baptized five adults, and bible study remains strong and vibrant. We studied the Book of Hebrews and began the Book of Acts.

The Christmas Angel Trees at each church provided Christmas gifts to 79 children (24 attend our After-School Program, 35 siblings, eight Grace Mission children and 10-12 teen gift cards). St. John's Episcopal Church partnered with us to provide a beautiful venue and atmosphere for our Family Christmas Service. We served dinner to the families, provided entertainment and handed out the gifts for the children. It was a lovely evening. We had 17 children go to Camp Weed and enjoy a wonderful Christian Education program along with all the fun camp activities. The Reading Academy helped 24 children prepare for the new school year by improving their reading ability. This past year's theme was 'An Ocean of Reading' and please go to our website – grace-mission.net - to see the video on the program. It was amazing! We ended the Academy with a trip to the ocean for all the children. This year the theme will be 'The Pollinators.' We also sent the children to two VBS programs; one at St. John's Episcopal Church and the other at New Mount Zion Church. The beginning of each school year we give out new backpacks to the After-School children filled with all the school supplies that they may need.

Grace Mission is committed to raising money to support our budget and ministry needs. We raised 34% of our income this year through our fundraisers, mailouts, 100 & 500 Club, and Alternative Markets. This of course is a reflection of the dedication and commitment of all the volunteers, sponsors and donors who support Grace Mission. Thank you!

Bishop Howard quoted Pope Francis in the most recent Diocesan Magazine which summarizes the diocesan mission:

“Christ performed the greatest service of all, reaching out to you and me from the cross in an embrace in love, so you and I are to respond to that love in service.”

Each day, as one of the Outreach Missions of the Diocese of Florida, we are responding to the love of Christ by sharing

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GRACE HAPPENS – COME AND SEE!

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P.O. BOX 10472, TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302

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Words of Grace (continued)

that love to others at Grace Mission. In particular, we are caring for “the least” of these” in our midst –the poor, weak, vulnerable, elderly, homeless, addicts and children. As a worshipping community grounded in the Gospel – Jesus reminds us, “*There is no greater love than laying down one’s life for another.*” In love, every day, we lay our lives down to help those that are truly broken, often forgotten, unloved, and misunderstood. Christ gave us this beautiful commission in Matthew 25 and in every possible way Grace Mission lives into the Great Commission.

Thank you for giving of your time, talent and treasure in helping those often forgotten in society but not by God.

Many Blessings to you in 2016.

Pastor Amanda+

News

Grace Mission celebrates 20 years of ministry.

The 7th Annual Evening of Grace will be held on Saturday, April 9, 2016 at St. John’s Episcopal Church.

4:00—5:30 p.m. Worship and praise service free and open to the public

5:30—8:00 p.m. Jazz concert gala featuring Avis Berry—\$100/person, silent auction and heavy hors d’oeuvres.



Through the Children’s Eyes

Elizabeth Crowe, Grace Children’s Ministries

To see the world through the eyes of a child, the simplest of things become something exciting and extraordinary. I had the privilege of seeing life through their eyes last year, and what a year of adventure it has been for them and for me!

We started back with the after-school program in January, and children did homework and reading with the help of about 75 tutors. They whined about having to work hard, but it was worth it to them as they burst into the room waving report cards with honor rolls and improved grades and ended a successful school year in June.

They had an exciting summer with Vacation Bible Schools (VBS), summer camp at Camp Weed, and the Reading

Academy. During St. John’s VBS, the children were wowed by the simple breakfast Jennifer Blalock provided in Eve’s Garden each morning of yogurt, bagels, cream cheese, and fruit. Simple to us, but a feast to them! And of course, in the process they were also delighted and fed spiritually with VBS programs.

Camp Weed is always a highlight for the children who qualify to go, and they loved being amply fed three times a day, staying in cabins in the woods, and being so loved and cared for. It would have been roughing it to us, but to them it was a five star resort! Kayaking, rock wall climbing, and archery made camp special, but so did something as ordinary as pool time, which many don’t get at home. One child wrote that the best day of his life was when he went to the pool at camp and for the first time jumped off a diving board. Simple, yes, but extraordinary for him! Camp gives them joy and self-confidence in doing new things, memories they tuck in their hearts, a time to be carefree children at play, and a time to learn and feel how much God loves them.

Their next adventure was the Reading Academy themed “An Ocean of Reading.” While reading and doing ocean lab activities, they learned about God’s magnificent ocean and were amazed at their discoveries. Their world was expanded when they saw coral reefs and colorful fish they could never have imagined and were awed by what is in the ocean when they saw the 3D movie “Under the Sea.” The Academy ended with a field trip to the Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve Center where they did lab work all morning and impressed the staff with their knowledge of estuaries. They were so proud of themselves for being able to answer so many questions! It was a rainy day, and they were sad thinking we were going home after lunch. But the skies cleared and they had their beach time to swim and play. I said I always breathe better at the beach, and a child told me it was because of the plankton since it makes more than half the oxygen we breathe. My turn to be amazed at how much they had learned and retained! While a beach trip seems ordinary to us, for some it was another amazing first time experience.

In the fall, there were smiles and oohs and aahs when they got their new backpacks with school supplies at our back-to-school Sunday. Another ordinary thing that was special to them! One boy saw me in Joe Louis a week before program began and said, “I can’t wait to come back!” They did well in school last fall and ended the year with good reports.

The last exciting thing they attended was our Family Christmas Celebration held at St. John’s Episcopal Church. In addition to the joy of worship and a feast, they were excited to take home gifts their parents put up for Christmas. I received texts from several moms on Christmas morning thanking us for the gifts, as they would not have had a Christmas without them. All in all, it was a great year for them with your support. Thank you so much for sharing in this ministry with us.

GRACE MISSION EPISCOPAL CHURCH

GRACEMISSION@NETTALLY.COM

850-224-3817

WWW.GRACEMISSION.NET