

# Grace Notes

January 2021  
"Come Home to Grace"

From the Minister:

## "A Good Word in the New Year"

Philo of Alexandria was an ancient Jewish philosopher. He is credited with saying this:

***"Be compassionate, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."***

Thinking about it, almost everyone I know, everyone I have met recently, and many others I hear about, are fighting ongoing great battles. These battles are in myriad different arenas, but practically all have dire consequences, depending on which direction the momentum of the battle swings. Great is the need for expressions of genuine human compassion in this cold, dark, heartless world. How healing and helpful it is when those expressions are given! Even small, seemingly insignificant expressions matter. What we all need to know is we are not alone in our battles. Of course, most important to remember is that God is always with us, easy as that is to forget. It often takes a good word from "God with skin on," that is, a fellow human being to remind us!

My experience of the Camino de Santiago was indeed life changing and the lessons were many and I am still making sense of many of them. There was one constant yet seemingly insignificant expression of support and solidarity among the pilgrim community (the pilgrims, the people who support you on the Way, etc.). It was the expression *Buen Camino!* It is Spanish for "good way" or "good route" or "good journey." It is meant as a blessing and an encouragement. After a while one kind of got used to hearing it from fellow travelers who might pass you, or whom you might pass or encounter along the Way. The most significant "Buen Camino!" I received was on the first day of my travels. Little did I know how much I would need to be reminded of a blessing that very day as it was a long and arduous journey that tested my endurance and determination to the limit! On a winding narrow path between small buildings of a farm, an old fellow was picking up chestnuts beneath a tree. He offered me one. I took it. "Gracias," I said. He looked at me directly and said, "Buen Camino!" but the manner in which he said it was like a bishop pronouncing a blessing upon me in a great cathedral. I believe he meant it sincerely. I said "Gracias! Buen Camino!" again and was on my way. Afterward I felt a little strange saying "Buen Camino" to him, as he was not on the camino as a pilgrim, but he was a fellow pilgrim journeying through life, and I am sure near the end of his days. That chestnut sits on my desk in my office and reminds me when I see it, to try to be a blessing to my fellow pilgrims on this journey through life, fighting whatever battles in which they may be engaged.

In talking with several fellow church members, I have remarked, "I think, when this whole COVID thing is done and past, our church should have a big party, maybe a cookout in the parking lot, or an endless coffee hour, a come-as-you-are, stay-as-long-as-you-want kind of affair. We haven't been very able to converse with each other. We will have over a year of catching up to do!" Everyone I know agrees! We *need* the human contact. We need the encouragement from each other. And together we need to cry some, for sure. Certainly together we need to laugh 'til it hurts! All that is food for our souls and it is very pleasing to God when we share it with each other.

Grace and Peace on the Journey! In other words, "*Buen Camino!*" - *Pastor Rob*



GRO would like to thank everyone for their continued support during this difficult year. During November & December we supported the following:

The Way Station Thanksgiving Feast  
 The Robert Bycroft Adopt a Class  
 Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes  
 Wreaths Across America  
 The Salvation Army of Salem  
 The Benjamin Joy Family  
 Our Shut-ins (Christmas flower arrangements)  
 Christmas Eve luminaries  
 4 C's Food Pantry  
 Tingle and Gudat families (Leetonia fire victims)

We are so grateful for our Grace Church family.  
 Have a blessed New Year!

Dear Consistory and Pastor Rob:

Thank you for the gift cards I received for Christmas. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated!

—Lauren McAndrew



1/1	Matt Jones
1/2	David McMaster
1/3	Jon Billings
1/4	Janis Sutherin Emma Gala
1/5	Don Reash
1/7	Geoff Barnes Quentin Barnes
1/8	Bonnie Sears Mike Perorazio
1/11	Beth Palette
1/12	Nicole McMaster
1/16	Gary Weber
1/17	Michael McMaster Lexi Smith Alivia Bell
1/18	Geri Whitfield
1/20	Becky Stearns
1/23	Sam Flynn
1/24	Alison Hoskinson
1/27	Katy Gala
1/31	Larry Snyder Joyce McKee

Happy Anniversary to:

1/14/2006 Donna & Gary Schoonover

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