

## **Snapshots of Grace** **Easter 3B – April 26, 2009**

There are some weeks where instead of a more formal sermon I just need to talk to you about the week we've had as a congregation. This is one of those weeks. And I do this every now and then because I know that I'm in a relatively privileged position in terms of what I get to see and experience in this place. While many of you plug into lots of different programs and services each week and while I certainly am dependent upon you keeping me filled in on the many things I don't catch, I also realize that my vantage point is unique and with that comes a desire to bring you in on some things that you might otherwise not get to see. So, consider these next few minutes "snapshots of Grace," a collage of sorts for the third-ish week of April 2009.

Snapshot #1: Last Sunday we baptized two new members into the Body Christ. Through water and the Holy Spirit, we welcomed Emily an eighteen year old Holland High School senior, and Will a seven month old , great grandson, grandson, little brother and son. Emily is soon take steps beyond Grace, beyond Holland to Eastern Michigan University where she will begin as a freshman next Fall. Will is soon to take his first steps. Both are signs of growth and hope and the spirit's presence among us.

Snapshot #2: On Friday afternoon, long time member, Larry LaFever died. Many of you know Larry as "The Bread Man," because he baked our communion bread for about 15 years. Larry sat about three or four or five pews back on my left and took most of his steps with a cane. He was a regular at the early service and then a regular at the late service and he would come to midweek meals and programs whenever he could. Larry was a loving, direct, compassionate, gruff, faithful, imperfect, generous and hilarious child of God. And besides making bread he also knit prayer shawls. We figured last week that Larry probably made about 30 of the blankets we distribute as signs of our love and God's love to those who need that kind of tender reminder. Larry fed us and covered us and he was very cranky to his sister who was forever cranky back. His memorial service, complete with Eucharist and lots of bread of course will be here at Grace this Thursday at 1:00.

Snapshot #3: Youth members prepared for Steppin' Up, the rite of passage which we celebrate today. The guys participated in an afternoon retreat, remembering how far they've come and preparing for the next steps they'll take into high school. Naming their growing freedoms, discernments and responsibilities. Today is our opportunity as a community of faith to supporting them as they grow and to ask them what bread they will bring, what shawls they will knit and what all of this means in their lives. And we pray for their parents too.

Snapshot #4: Five of us attended diocesan Convention for two days in Kalamazoo. Cal, Carol, Christie and Dave and I talked and listened and at times wrestled with resolutions and learnings and stretches we are making as the Diocese of Western Michigan. We approved a resolution that will likely lead to a partner relationship among the dioceses of the lower peninsula and the Dominican Republic. We discussed a renewed approach to confirmation. Some of us listened to and presentation on the Emergent Church. And all of us ate and prayed and sang and celebrated with a large ballroom full of Episcopalians from 63 different parishes that run from Petoskey down to the southern border of the state.

And there is so much more I could tell you about this week. Steve Jenkins' Dad died and we'll mourn and celebrate with Steve's family later today at First Pres. Members from our parish participated in the Men's Cursillo weekend of the diocese or prepared for the upcoming Women's weekend. This week there were daycare kids running up and down the hallways here almost every day, dreaming on the gymnasium that will be there a mere 2 ½ months from now as our center launches into Maplewood School. This week there were programs planned, meals shared, Bibles studied, jobs searched for, good medical news received, hard medical news received, meetings held, newcomers welcomed, life and faith and one another wrestled with and embraced, strangers and friends listened to and loved. There were mistakes made and forgivenesses offered. And you can add your snapshots too, your experiences, all a week in the life of Grace Church.

And so if someone came to Grace this week and looked at our hands and our feet, maybe they would see and begin to believe something that was like resurrection good news for them. There are babies and kids and youth and young adults and older people here learning and growing and trying our so very hardest to be faithful. So maybe if someone ate with us this week, or fasted with us this week their eyes were opened in the breaking or sharing or passing up of the bread. Bread made for us by people like Larry. Maybe if someone walked with us this week, and listened with us this week, they were able to glimpse the faith that lives among us, the faith proclaimed among us, the faith which this morning's gospel says we are to witness to every day.

I'm going to end by simply saying Thank You. Thank you for welcoming Emily and Will and Larry. Thank you for celebrating and praying with Graeme, Claire, Anna, Alyssa and Maxine and their parents. Thank you for walking with Steve, Eileen, Mark, Leigh, Mary, the Diocese of Western Michigan, and recipients of funds from CROP. Thank you for your hands your feet your minds your hearts your bread your food your fasts. Because it is through these many snapshots of Grace that we come to know and together actually become the risen Body of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!