

Prayer

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we 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 we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.* (Book of Common Prayer)

This is probably one of the hardest things I have ever done: it ranks right up there with climbing a 60 foot climbing wall (I'm really scared of heights) and taking a helicopter over Mt. St. Helens when it was its most active since it exploded in 1980 (I found that out after the fact, thank heavens). But, it also has been an opportunity, an opportunity to ask why do I give of my time, talent, and treasure to Grace Episcopal Church? Well, it is my nature as a scientist to ask questions, so as I explored the question of why do I give, I asked two other questions: What is Grace Episcopal Church and what is it worth to me?

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place that drew me to it when I was 29 years old, a brand new faculty member at William Jewell College with my family dispersed in Pennsylvania and Oklahoma, a place that became part of the family I chose.

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place where I grew in spirit, in knowledge, in relationship with God, because of the members of the body of Christ I met along the way – Fr. Valentine, Ann Marie and Patric Shannon, Don and Citty Haden, Suzanne Deis, Theo and Tom Berry, Dick and Ginny Hoffman, Mother Susan and Father John, all of you

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place where I, with my church family, am in communion with Christ, where each Sunday I thank God for the blessings of this life, ask for help to do God's will, pray for my family and friends, ask for forgiveness...

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place where my church family supports me and others with prayer and food and company and laughter and community

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place where I went for solace and celebration of life when those I loved died, and where at the end of my life, I, with those who have gone before me, will leave my ashes

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place of learning, through worship, sermons, forums, Sunday School, friends – of learning about God, about how to live my life, about music, about stewardship, about all the stuff of life

What is Grace Episcopal Church?

It is a place that I'm proud to call my church home because it takes the calls of justice and stewardship seriously through action – we feed those in need, we walk with Integrity, we steward the earth, we welcome all to the table

So, what is it worth to me?

It is worth doing something I said I'd never do – stand up and talk to you all in this way...

Seriously though...

What is it worth to me?

This Christian community, this body of Christ on earth, is interwoven with who I am – just as I have a home and have a family outside of church, I have church home and a church family. Just as I care for my home and family, I must care for my church home and family.

So, what is it worth to me?

It is worth giving so that I can have this Christian community and the people and structures that make it survive – Mother Susan, Brett, Trish, Rachela, Andrea, Verna -- the heating, cooling, water, electricity, repairs, mowing, snow removal...this beautiful physical structure

What is it worth to me?

I give to the church a portion of the gifts God has given to me – I'm a teacher, so I teach and am a lay reader; I like to create, build and nourish others, so I serve on the Vestry and committees to put in place programs and structures that allow for worship and serving others; I earn money in the marketplace using the gifts God has given me, so I give back part of that money, with the tithe as my benchmark, in order to support my church home and family.

What is it worth to me? Perhaps another way to look at this question would be to ask, what would I be and what would I have, were not the family of Grace Episcopal Church in my life?