



GREETINGS FROM THE GROVE
-FEBRUARY 2019-



Where in the World Are We?

I don't know about all of you, but for me last year ended in a rush like I've never experienced before. January has come and gone and I'm still blinking. In last month's newsletter I tried to give an idea of what my hopes are for the year; I want it to be a year of rest for leadership, those of you who have consistently put your shoulders to the plow serving in so many capacities in the church, and I also want it to be a year of growth as we seek to welcome others into a group that we genuinely like being part of!

These kind of things are easy to say, but hard to accomplish! It has been a rocky start to the year – we have hit some bumps as we've tried to get committees set and chairs appointed, largely because of missing church due to bad weather. It feels like it has been difficult to gain traction and things seem a little unsettled. But please don't think we have given up!

Planning Ahead

One of my biggest goals for this year is to plan ahead a little better. I've always loved learning, but I have not always loved school. When I was in high school it was easy enough for me to habitually leave things till the last minute. My work was always acceptable compared to my peers, but it was unpleasant for me. I was always stressed out and felt like I turned in things half done. I didn't think I was reaching my potential. Then I got to college. I learned *very* quickly that I could not wait for the last minute to do my work like I had in the past. I began spending regular time in the library and stayed ahead of my deadlines. Even though it seemed like I was doing more to some people, I did not feel stress and I came to deeply love school. I even began to look forward to tests and term papers!

Because of my preparation I came to see them more as a conversation with my professors and less as obstacles between me and graduating. It was an incredibly valuable lesson for me. A little planning makes life much easier and yields a better final product. I graduated *cum laud* with a combined major in Greek and Latin and I miss college every day. It was not my IQ, it was learning to work ahead.

One of the things we seem to suffer from chronically at Kallam Grove is a lack of communication about planning, between committees and sometimes even in committees! We don't have a central place to collect and coordinate the various events and programs of the church. This has led to confusion in the past. It has also hurt because there is little to no time to advertise what's going on. This hurts attendance and that hurts morale. Many of you have had the experience of planning an event, pouring time and resources into it, and then no one showed up. That hurts. And it makes it difficult to want to keep trying.

But there can be hope. We have resources; ways to get coordinated. John Horne has always dreamed of using the website as a place to collect information on a common calendar. Believe it or not, we also have a Kallam Grove Facebook page, which also holds enormous potential for cross-communications. Understanding that not all of you are technologically inclined, we also have this newsletter, which is accompanied by a calendar. We are in an amazing time when all of these can be easily synced with the press of a few buttons. The resources are there, but we need the other half. We need the planning.

I will take a minute here to brag about the Youth Advisory Committee. On Tuesday, January 8th they met to make a plan for the year. They brainstormed different youth outings and set tentative dates for all of them. Of course these dates are flexible (as witnessed by the eventual cancellation of the January event because of the ice storm...) But, as a result of that one meeting they have a schedule to keep them accountable and it allows us to advertise their events. Notice, the event scheduled for Feb. 10th has been in the bulletin several weeks now. This is great!

Obviously not every committee will have so much planning to do. I pray the Cemetery Committee doesn't have any work this year, but different boards and committees will have events to plan. I encourage you to at least start brainstorming sooner than later. Also, I encourage you to use me as a resource. If there is an event you are thinking about doing, but aren't sure, please ask. I want to support you in any and every way I can. Finally, if you have questions about what other committees are up to, please ask. If I don't know, then I should find out! Kallam Grove is a church directed by its membership. That is how the bylaws make it. It is not my job to plan the events and programs of the church. But, I do see it as my job to support and promote the programs y'all decide on.

It may seem like more work up front, but I think this is the best way to set ourselves up for the year of rest I envision. Work smarter, not harder, as they say. So I encourage you in various committees to meet this first quarter and begin the conversation; "What do we need to do this year?" "What do we want to do this year?" It does not need to be stressful or difficult and it all begins with a conversation. And when you have ideas, please let me know, so I can help spread the word!

February...

The part of planning at the church that is my job is services throughout the year. The most important tool I use is the Revised Common Lectionary. The lectionary is a standard set of readings set apart for every Sunday and special holiday of the year. The readings never change and rotate over a three-year period. Over that three years just about every part of the Bible is read. The lectionary is built around a slightly different calendar than our secular calendar and so I find often in my life that I am living on a slightly different schedule than everyone else. Christmas is a good example. I am on a totally different schedule than *everyone* else when it comes to Christmas. You may accuse me of being uncooperative or just weird. Why not just use the same calendar as everyone else? Doesn't it make the church less relevant when it doesn't observe the same holidays as everyone else? Maybe a little, but the lectionary connects us to something bigger. Christ demands our first allegiance, even before our country or culture. Our culture has a bad habit of deciding its current opinions are infallible and final, but our brief hundred year history doesn't compare to the two-thousand years of the church's faithfulness. A different calendar, yes, but one that reminds us we are part of something much, much bigger than anything we can imagine.

In the church there are three main holidays, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Each of these holidays has a larger amount of time built around it to help prepare or hold its profundity. Advent comes before Christmas and Christmas is a twelve day party. Advent is also the beginning of a new year in the church. Lent comes before Easter and Eastertide lasts until Pentecost. These are the big seasons in the church year and the big seasons in my own life. There are also holes in the year when nothing special is going on.

Why am I yammering on about this? Well it's February and it is a weird time. Even in the secular world we can't figure it out. Is it a time to be sentimental? Valentine's Day. Is it a time to be patriotic? President's Day. Is it a time to be proud/angry/offended/sad/hopeful? These and whatever other things come with Black History Month? It is a hard month to find a theme. Similarly in the church, it's a weird time. Lent is coming quickly, it will start the first week of March and I am already trying to plan for it. Keep your ears to the ground because we will be doing a Bible study throughout Lent to prepare for Easter. But what about February?

As I sat to write this entry I wondered what theme I should pursue. The obvious is *Saint* Valentine's day. But honestly it isn't really a church holiday at all. In the words of Lucy Vanpelt, "Let's face it, we all know it's a big commercial racket. It's run by a big eastern syndicate, you know." So what is our theme for February?

Well, our sermons are coming out of Ezra/Nehemiah and Acts. As I said at the beginning of this entry, I feel like January went by so fast and I am still trying to come to grips with the new year. To me, Ezra/Nehemiah and Acts are stories about wrestling with new things. In Ezra/Nehemiah the exiles have returned home after devastation a generation earlier and have rebuilt the old temple. That means they have built a new temple. Yes, the building is in the same place, but this is something new. There is no king, no holy ark, no widespread public support. It is in these years that a new way to be Jewish was born. Similarly, something new is happening in Acts. Jesus has had a whirlwind ministry that culminated in a gruesome death and mind-boggling resurrection from the dead.

As if that were not enough, Jesus has gone and sent the Holy Spirit to take over. Talk about heads spinning! How could any of those early followers of Jesus have comprehended it?! Something new was happening. We are given two very different pictures, two very different potentials in these stories of new beginnings.

My second goal for the year is growth. Yes, this absolutely means in membership, but it also means in spiritual depth and understanding. It is a new year and also, I sense, a time of new beginning at Kallam Grove. When I came here there was the yearning for a new generation to take control. That is happening right now! Any time we come to a new beginning we face different potential outcomes. In Ezra/Nehemiah the people pursue a particular path as they seek to recreate some of the glories of the past. Their work is sincere, and their hearts are in the right places, but their efforts seem flat. At the end of the story we do not have a life-giving community that is changing the world around it; instead we have a small group who is seeking to cut itself off from the world around it, hunkering down in the face of perceived persecution. Totally cut off and un-prepared to cope with the massive changes it and the world around it were about to experience (i.e Hellenism).

In Acts, though, we are given a totally different picture. In contrast to the solemnity and deliberation of Ezra/Nehemiah, the early church is taken by storm when the Holy Spirit shows up and turns their world upside down. Even as they try to contain and form themselves into a community the Spirit thwarts them – bringing in outsiders and disrupting long held assumptions. By grace they begin to see this was a long-planned move by God, evidenced in the writings of the prophets of old. Stripped of their pre-conceptions this new group begins to bring seismic shifts to the world around it – bringing healing and new life where before there was only death.

The two groups on the surface are so similar – Ezra/Nehemiah and those first disciples both want earnestly to do God's will and to follow him well. But the results are so different. The Church today still lives with these two potential outcomes forever in front of it. We can be well-meaning but still end up walling ourselves into a prison of our own making. We can cut ourselves off from the world around us and, in the end, bring destruction on our own heads. Or we can surrender ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit. We can allow ourselves to be uncomfortable and confused – to be with people who are not like us – and by the grace of God, become a blessing to the world around us. These are not stories about us, but they offer incredible guidance for us. We will be talking about these ideas in the next few sermons, but I encourage y'all take them and ponder them and make them your own.

Remember, Kallam Grove is your church! Something new is happening here and it's yours to decide what you want it to be!

The 2019 Nursery Schedule has been posted.
If you have not received your copy, check the posted schedule
in the nursery or contact Susanne.
Thank you for volunteering to serve in the nursery!



**The Youth are going roller skating,
Sunday, February 10th,
at 2:00pm in Greensboro.
Lunch will be provided after worship in
the fellowship hall.**

Be on the lookout for more mini-meetings to elect
chairs for 2019 committees.
It is very important that we have everyone's participation
to ensure we have chairs elected as soon as possible. Thank you!



Dear Kallam Grove Family,

We would like to thank you for all the prayers, calls, cards, and visits since we began this odyssey June 11 with the discovery of David's bladder cancer. We are still facing many ups and downs and he has a long way yet for full recovery. We are meeting with doctors regularly about his GI issues, maintaining kidney function, heart health, and urological issues. We are on a countdown to March 25 when his surgeon will begin the testing to determine his level of healing and if he is ready for the scans needed to determine if the cancer has spread. Please keep us in your prayers as with the weather issues it is very difficult for David to get out. We hope that we can get back to church as soon as possible as that adds so much to our morale and spiritual strength.

Thank you and God bless this church,
Becky and David