



## *The* ANGELUS

News of the Life of GRACE CHURCH

### Over 150 Years in the Heart of White Plains

We have just said goodbye to summer and hello to fall on September 23. Spiritually speaking, fall represents the harvest time of year, a time to acknowledge growth and expansion as a natural evolution of our organic being. Our lives go through cycles of growth, harvest, death, and rebirth just as we see in nature.


For many people autumn is their favorite season. They love the changing colors, the falling leaves, pumpkin pie, apple picking and, after the heat of summer, the cooler weather. In most of the United States autumn is referred to as "fall," a term that probably came into use because of the falling leaves.

And more than any other season people feel a spiritual connection to fall. Fall is traditionally seen as a period of change leading to the dark of winter. As the leaves fall to the ground, we are reminded that nature's cycles are mirrored in our lives. Autumn is a time for letting go and releasing things that have been a burden. Fall is the time for letting the Spirit take charge of our lives.

Autumn reminds us of the impermanence of things. Spring and summer are the times of budding and flowering and as we see the changes that occur in the fall, we appreciate all of the beauty surrounding us and how fragile it is.

Take a walk. Look at the color of the sky and grass and leaves. Feel the crisp air and the familiar smells of the fall season. Pay attention to what nature is doing. To everything there is a purpose, including the changing of the seasons. The change of the seasons reminds us that we have to keep changing. We should not become stagnant. Fall challenges us to live every day to the fullest and to embrace the beauty of being alive.

What a wonderful time of year this is. We just had our well attended Homecoming Barbecue where we all had the opportunity to catch up with one another, see parishioners that we had not seen in a long time, and share the wonderful happenings in our lives over the summer months. After the hot summer



months, we now come back to church on a more routine basis, and we settle into our church/school calendar year.

Welcome Back Grace Church!

I look forward to seeing you in church.

God Bless,

Adolfo+

## **A New Perspective on Regular Church Attendance**

By Dr. Galen Guengerich, New York City Pastor

We need to learn the virtue of staying put and staying true, of choosing again what we chose before. In my view that's one of the main reasons we come to church.

We're here not so much to make spiritual progress each week, though that's wonderful when it happens. Rather, we mostly come for the consistency—for what remains the same from week to week: the comfort of the liturgy, the solace of the music, the reassuring sight of familiar faces, the enduring presence of ancient rites and timeless symbols. We're here to remind ourselves of values that unite us and commitments that keep us heading in the right direction. We're here to choose again what we chose before.



## **FALL SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES**

### **OCTOBER**

Wednesday, October 4 <sup>th</sup>	Diocesan Convention Meeting Roll-out Meeting
Sunday, October 8 <sup>th</sup>	200 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Meeting – Library Room
Wednesday, October 11 <sup>th</sup>	Diocesan Convention Meeting Roll-out Meeting
Sunday, October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Pledge Sunday
Wednesday, October 18 <sup>th</sup>	Diocesan Convention Meeting Roll-out Meeting
2024 Stewardship Theme	“God gives us two hands, therefore giving back to God all that is his”
Tuesday, October 24 <sup>th</sup>	Vestry Meeting
Wednesday, October 25 <sup>th</sup>	Diocesan Convention Meeting Roll-out Meeting
Sunday, October 29 <sup>th</sup>	La Gracia Committee Meeting

### **NOVEMBER**

Wednesday, November 1	Diocesan Convention Meeting Roll-out Meeting
Saturday, November 11 <sup>th</sup>	247 <sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention Meeting
Sunday, November 12 <sup>th</sup>	200 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Meeting – Library
Sat & Sun, November 18 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup>	Grace Church Retreat- English-Sat 9am-4pm
Sunday, November 19 <sup>th</sup>	11:00am Bilingual Eucharist
Thursday, November 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thanksgiving Day– Office Closed
Friday, November 24 <sup>th</sup>	Day After Thanksgiving – Office Closed
Sunday, November 26 <sup>th</sup>	La Gracia Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 28 <sup>th</sup>	Vestry

### **DECEMBER**

Sunday, December 10 <sup>th</sup>	200 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Meeting – Library
Monday, December 11 <sup>th</sup>	La Virgen De Guadalupe (La Gracia)
Thursday, December 14 <sup>th</sup>	Annual Christmas Dinner 7:00 PM
Sunday, December 17 <sup>th</sup>	Lessons & Carols 10:00 AM
Sunday, December 24 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Pageant 4:00 PM
Sunday, December 24 <sup>th</sup>	There will be only 1 Sunday Service at 10:00 in English
	7:30 La Gracia Christmas Eve Service
	10:00 PM Grace Church Christmas Eve Service in English
Sunday, December 31 <sup>st</sup>	New Year’s Eve Service

### **JANUARY**

Sunday, January 28 <sup>th</sup>	Bilingual Mass 11:00 AM	Annual Meeting
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## **VISITATION TO GRACE/LA GRACIA FROM BISHOP MICHAEL FOSTER HYDE**



Our newly elected Bishop Matthew Hyde wasted no time after his consecration in making his first visit to Grace/LaGracia on July 16th. One single church service in both English and Spanish was held that day. His sermon was delivered from the front of the church and was effectively translated by our Senior Warden, Daisy Calderon.



The Bishop met with the entire Vestry before the morning service. He gave each Vestry member a chance to share with him what was on their minds.

The congregation prays for the Bishop and asks God's blessing on his new work in this Diocese.







Judge Delores Braithwaite, White Plains City Councilwoman The Honorable Victoria Presser, and White Plains Mayor Thomas Roach attended the service.



The day culminated in the parish hall with a festive reception.

IT WAS A GREAT DAY IN THE LIFE OF GRACE/LA GRACIA!



## **A PRAYER FOR ALL SAINTS DAY**

NOVEMBER 1st

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord: Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen


From the Book of Common Prayer

### **Hymn to be Sung on All Saints Day**

Words Written by William Walsham How

For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,  
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed,  
Alleluia, alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might,  
Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight,  
Thou in the darkness, drear, the one true Light,



Alleluia, alleluia

## **AN IMPORTANT LESSON I LEARNED IN CHILDHOOD**

**By Mary Baker**

As a child, I remember that, when my father got paid every Friday, the first thing he did was to take 10% of that pay and put it into the family “church tithe box.” In actuality, this was really an old empty cigar box that was kept just for that purpose. On Sundays, we kids would go to that box and take out our dimes for our Sunday School offering. My parents would also take their church offering from it. Sometimes my parents would dip into it to give for special donations to good causes or to the poor. But it was never used for anything other than “God’s work in the world.”

My father was never wealthy, but over the years, his income changed somewhat from just a salary to also include income from investments, and eventually it included his pension and Social Security. However, to the day he died at age 94, he kept meticulous monthly records of each investment check as it arrived and all other monthly income. At the end of each month, he would add it all up and take 10% and put it in the donation column, which he always gave away.

My parents were married and started their family during the depression years. That could have easily been used as an excuse to give less. But for them, that was never an option. God’s portion came right off the top!

My parents lived a life of good stewardship. And in the process, they taught me the valuable lesson of good stewardship. My parents firmly believed that everything they had was a gift from God. Out of their thankfulness for all His blessings to them, they returned a tithe portion for His use. Inevitably, this attitude was passed on to me. It was a very secure feeling as a child to believe that God was aware of all our needs and that He would bless us so that we “had enough.” But it was equally important that we always knew that it was our responsibility to return God’s portion for His use in the world.

What better lesson can parents provide than this? What better lesson can we give than to teach our children that our family’s security in all things is in the hands of the Lord! What better lesson is there than to lead by example and to demonstrate that a life well lived is a life of good stewardship in all things!



## **Gardening to Heal**


By Father Adolfo Moronta+



Throughout the Bible gardens are used as a symbol of God's love and care. Gardening is a way to connect with God and nature and a way to slow down and appreciate life. It can be a very spiritual experience while creating something living and beautiful. I am seeing this firsthand recently. Gardening is also one of the ways we can find tranquility and healing. The routine of tending your plants and working with your hands helps relieve even the worst stress.







As you know my mother is facing a very difficult situation with her health. But there is one thing that she really enjoys and that is gardening. Therefore, with the help of my stepfather and me she has been spending her time at the Rectory gardening; planting different types of plants that have beautified the front entrance.

So, as my mother digs and plants and tends to the garden, she finds relief from the worries and fears that she faces. It's a time when her mind can focus on the sense of hope and faith she is creating with the flowers. It reminds her that God is all around us and is always with us. And while she is using this gardening time to heal, she is also bringing a touch of beauty to the Rectory grounds.





## **Grace Church Retreat**

### **Life in the Spirit Seminar November 18 & 19**

#### **By Rev. Adolfo Moronta**

What is a Spiritual retreat? A Spiritual retreat is time set apart to be in quiet, rest, and solitude with God. For generations, people have gone on spiritual retreats to encounter God and experience spiritual renewal. Retreats remove us from noise and distraction, into a place of spiritual refreshing and renewing.

When Jesus was on earth, he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit upon his followers. And he promised them that the Holy Spirit would do things among them that they could experience. He told them that they would be clothed with power from on high, that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes and that they will be witnesses... to the ends of the earth.

Life in the Spirit Seminar is a means to a better life through Christ. Through this retreat you will be guided to take the necessary steps which will allow Jesus to establish or restore or deepen a relationship with you.

#### **Life in the Spirit Seminar Goals**

1. To help participants in the Seminar to establish, re- establish or deepen an individual relationship with God through Jesus, the Christ.
2. To help participants yield to the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. God is active in the lives of believers.
3. As believers we are called to membership in a faith community, and to a life of service using the gifts, fruits and charisms offered through the Holy Spirit.
4. New Life means a life of discipleship and growth into Christ Jesus. As Christians we need effective means of growth, such as small faith-sharing groups, prayer, study, sacraments, and the reading of Scripture.

The retreat will help people deepen their faith in the Lord and grow in relationship with him, and it will include speakers, scripture, music, prayer and small groups.



## **200<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

### ***Honoring Our Past Celebrating Our Present Embracing Our Future***

Despite vacations and other issues that arise during the Summer, the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee continued to be hard at work planning for our **200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** that will take place in September 2024.

The Committee has developed a special Anniversary logo and tag line which will be used on all letters, invitations and information relating to the celebration. In addition, we have developed a separate e-mail and chat room for the Committee so that we can keep in touch with each other and also coordinate and review our work and our progress. The Committee has its own P.O. Box and address as well as a separate telephone line so that we are able to ensure that the work of the Anniversary Committee does not get confused or entangled in our regular church functions.

What is really exciting is the amount of history about our Church that has already been uncovered so far – and how much our history continues to grow.

We are exploring various fundraising endeavors and activities as our celebration will require a large amount of funding. These fundraising efforts are being developed and designed so that we will be able to include all members and friends of Grace/LaGracia. We will keep you posted and graciously and humbly ask for your support of these endeavors.

While the planning of our **200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** continues to be a “work in progress” - we are progressing nicely. We need the cooperation of everyone to make it all work – so if a Committee member reaches out to you for assistance – please consider saying “Yes” because this is “our event” and its success depends on all of us working together. Also, if there is a committee you wish to join or offer assistance, please let us know.

Thank you and Blessings to All.

*Delores Scott Brathwaite, Chair  
Hillary Fleming, Co-Chair  
Daisy Calderon, Co-Chair (LaGracia)*

#### ***Planning Committee Members:***

*Irene Alves, Linda Harmon, Ginger Waters Grant, Mary Baker -Historians  
Nate Hogan and Karen Odom – Communications, PR, Media  
Barbara Biles and Linda Harmon – Save the Date and Invitations  
Eileen McLean – Music  
George O’Hanlon – Youth and Logistics  
Melanie Jackson – Fundraiser Gala Celebration  
Audrey Taylor, Tom Lacalamita – Administration and Technology*

***Note: Everyone is involved and assisting in our Fundraising efforts.***

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

By George O'Hanlon

The Grace Church Youth Education program is off to a fast start with a full slate of programs and activities. We began our year on September 10<sup>th</sup> with Father Adolfo blessing the book bags of our students during the church service on that day, followed by registration of our students into our program. The book bag event was a joint blessing of the Grace Church and LaGracia students, since we were holding a joint service on that day. The fact that we held that service in the Parish Hall did nothing to dampen the festive mood of this event. In fact, the cozier confines allowed us to portray the scope and breadth of our program. And it was another example of the “One Church” theme under which our Sunday School operates.



Classes began on September 24<sup>th</sup>, for our primary students and Rite 13 (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) students. Our primary curriculum, “Sermons4Kids” affords a rich set of materials tailored to the ages of the students. The teachers connect these materials to the sermon for the week, making our classes both educational and fun. Our Rite 13 students study a curriculum covering many topics relevant to the Christian faith, including prayer, images of God, the importance of good works. The program culminates in March of the student’s 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, with a Celebration of Adulthood, as the student moves on to high school. The Celebration takes place as a ceremony during the 10am service and is an opportunity for the entire congregation to share in the Celebration. Our high school students are in a program we call “Journey To Adulthood”, and is ably taught by Lauren Reid, who has taught the class for several years. Members of this class meet outside of the 10am service timeframe, and typically take on projects as part of their program.

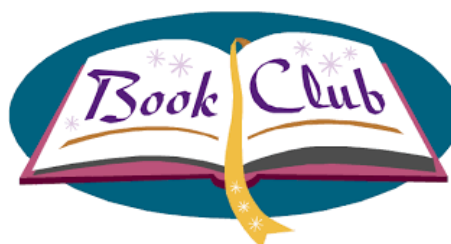
In October, the Sunday school will participate in the White Plains Escape Room activity. The concept is that working as a team, the members respond to clues in an effort to solve a mystery and escape from the room in which they are temporarily kept. The activity requires quick and deep thinking, in order to solve enough clues to escape from the room within the allotted timeframe. And it is designed to engender a team spirit among our students.



Many of our students also participate in the service as acolytes, readers and ushers. It is our hope to engender a sense of service in our students at a young age, through this service. Our Sunday School is always looking forward to welcoming more students. Anyone with questions or who may have interest in our program should reach out to our teaching staff, who will happily respond to any questions.

## Grace Church Book Club Update

Celebrating 24 years!



The Book Club is almost 25 years strong! Our 24th season launches when we meet at 7 pm by Zoom on Tuesday, October 12. We will discuss our summer read, **The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois** by poet Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, and the unique approach she takes in telling the story of the fictional Garfield family from their ancestry before and during slavery through major life-changing events to the present, weaving in thoughts or “songs” of W.E.B. Du Bois along the way. Individual Book Club members will also share other titles that captured their interest during our summer break.

Stay tuned for more, including our book selections for the upcoming season. Every season takes us through exciting new adventures and interesting discussions. Who knows where our next book journey will take us! If you're interested in traveling with us, contact Karen Odom ([karenodom@yahoo.com](mailto:karenodom@yahoo.com)) or feel free to join in a meeting any time. You're always welcome whether it's for a single meeting or indefinitely.

--Submitted by Karen Odom

# La Gracia Annual Retreat

**Rev. Adolfo Moronta**



On September 9 & 10 La Gracia held its annual retreat called Life in the Spirit Seminar. The retreat aimed to renew in our parishioners a deep personal commitment to Jesus Christ in openness to the Holy Spirit and His gifts. It serves as an introduction to a life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

During the two days participants were part of a spiritual process of seven teaching sessions, each one building upon the previous one. The retreat included speakers from both Florida and La Gracia and was accompanied by joyful and spiritual music, prayer times and small group meetings where the participants shared their point of views, asked questions and formed a small community.



68 Parishioners participated in this annual retreat which has an objective to: 1) Begin, renew or deepen a relationship with Jesus, 2) Motivate parishioners to a fuller participation in Parish Life, 3) Developed greater appreciation of Eucharist, 4) Deepen prayer life and 5) Increase study of Scripture.

Many who attended the retreat experienced God and the Holy Spirit in a way they had never done before. Many received the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** just as the Apostles did in the upper room on Pentecost; gifts which are given to improve our lives and the lives of our families, the church and our community. It's good to mention that La Gracia has a retreat every year and we are looking forward for many more to come.



Almighty and gracious Father, we give thee thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we beseech thee, faithful stewards of thy great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer



## **JEAN-MARIE ALVES BRADFORD, MD**



Jean-Marie Alves-Bradford, MD, has joined the Office of Medical Education as the Inaugural Associate Dean for Medical School Professionalism in the Learning Environment. She works collaboratively with the Offices at the medical center, medical school, and New York Presbyterian. She spearheads the school's efforts in designing and implementing training programs for departments, clerkships, and courses related to student mistreatment issues. She is a conciliator who assists students in resolving personal issues reflected in the learning environment that are affecting their academic life. Along with other members of the Office of Student Affairs, Dr. Alves-Bradford is one more point of contact for students who wish to discuss sensitive or personal topics or obtain advice.

## **SORRAYA SAMPSON**



The Grace Church Family congratulates Sorraya Sampson for being honored with the prestigious Lifetime Achievement award at the Women's Empowerment Summit by President Michael McMillan and the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, Inc.



## AGUSTINA AND RONAK KUMAR RENEW THEIR WEDDING VOWS



At the Sunday, July 30<sup>th</sup>, church service, Agustina and Ronak Kumar renewed their wedding vows with their children by their side. A celebration for the congregation was held in the parish hall after the service.

## DR. PAXTON J. LOUIS



Paxton Louis recently earned his Doctor of Professional Studies degree in Computer Science from Pace University, Seidenberg School of Computer Science and Information Systems. He started the program in 2017 and successfully defended his dissertation on August 16, 2023.

His dissertation title is: “Pattern Analysis of Anomalous Behavior of a Heterogeneous Software Defined Wireline Public Telecommunications Network Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

### **Walter Simon Accepts the Award for Grace Church**



For over twenty years Grace Church along with Lifting Up Westchester encouraged the participation of Community Service Volunteers (CSV) in Grace's Kitchen and the Holiday BBQ's. CSV were drawn from parishioners, Junior and High School students, Jack and Jill, Delta Sorority, Synagogues, St Barts, St Andrew, other churches, and individuals from the public who all wanted to support the feeding ministry of those in need.

After fellow parishioner, Delores Sacott Braithwaite, was elected as a Greenburgh Town Judge, she recognized the potential of expanding the CSV program to include nonviolent low-level offenders. Not all, but most court assigned CSV committed various levels of traffic violations. The tent of the court ordered CSV is to intervene and provide non-violent offenders a second chance to redeem themselves with community service and avoid additional involvement in the Criminal Justice system. Most days, there are one or two Community Service Volunteers supporting the activities of Grace's kitchen as well as contributing to the maintenance of the building and grounds.

The CSV program came to a temporary halt during the height of the COVID epidemic. The Community Services Program started with 14 organizations, however, after the epidemic only eight returned to be a part of the program. Those eight were honored at a ceremony held at the Greenburgh Town Court on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, and facilitated by Judge Delores Scott Brathwaite. The honorees were as follows:

Calvary Baptist Church  
Food Bank of Westchester  
Grace/LaGracia Church  
Greenburgh Neighborhood Health Center

Lifting Up Westchester  
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church  
Theodore D. Young Community Center  
Union Baptist Church

The Honorees received Certificate of Appreciation from the Greenburgh Court, also Proclamations from the County Board of Legislators and the Town of Greenburgh.

## 2023 Homecoming Barbecue By Carole Lashley

On Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, Grace Church/La Gracia held its 2023 Homecoming Barbecue at the Rectory. The event, hosted by Father Adolfo, was attended by many enthusiastic parishioners, who came together to celebrate for a time of food, fun and fellowship.



A hint of fall was in the air as the sun shone down on the grounds of the Rectory. The property embellished with yellow mums and plants of various colors caught the eye of the attendees. A sea of tables, chairs and tents dotted the landscape of the garden.

The food and desserts provided were of Latin, Caribbean and American origin. In addition, a fruit stand showcased beautifully carved items of fruit.





As attendees ate and enjoyed the fellowship of one another, the rhythmic Latin sounds of the Mariachi Band provided background music for all to enjoy.



In the true spirit of Grace/La Gracia, many individuals volunteered time, talents and resources to make this a special day. A creative team met weeks in advance to plan and organize the event. Volunteers contributed by cooking, assisting with setup and cleanup of the event, or donating resources.

A big thank you to all who participated, once again your efforts contributed to another successful event!





## ***FREE PARKING FOR GRACE/LA GRACIA MEMBERS***

- Pay Station codes for free 4 hour parking during church services are available for **PLEDGING MEMBERS** of Grace/La Gracia
- Generally, one code is given per pledge; if a family needs two codes they can request one from Ginger Waters
- Coupon codes can only to be used in the Hamilton/Main garage across from the church
- Coupon codes can only be used on Sundays and High Holy days
- To request a code or to confirm a code you already have, please see Ginger Waters after church or leave a message with your email address and/or phone number with the church office.
- Directions for use of the code at the pay station:
  - Select the language you want to use
  - Choose *pay by space*
  - Enter the number of the space (stall) in which you are parked
  - Choose *Pay for parking*
  - When the options for paying appear, choose *More Selections*
  - Choose *4 hour coupon*
  - Enter the code you have been given
  - The screen will say free parking and a receipt will be produced



## **ADVENT**

### **Rev. Adolfo Moronta**

Believe it or not, Advent is near! The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” and it marks the beginning of the Church's liturgical year. Each year, Advent begins on a Sunday between November 27th and December 3rd. Advent 2023 will begin on Sunday, December 3rd, and ends on Sunday, December 24th.

The Advent season is a time of preparation that directs our hearts and minds to Christ’s second coming at the end of time and to the anniversary of Our Lord’s birth on Christmas.

Like Lent, the liturgical color for Advent is purple since both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.

The four weeks of Advent are broken down into the themes:

1. Hope (or promise) First Week, Sunday December 3rd: [Isaiah 9](#)
2. Preparation (waiting or prophecy) Second Week, December 10th: [Isaiah 40](#)
3. Joy (peace) Third Week, December 17th: [Matthew 2](#)
4. Love (adoration) Fourth Week, December 24th: [John 3](#)

Over the course of four weeks, Scripture readings move from passages about Christ’s return in judgment to Old Testament passages about the expectation of the coming Messiah to New Testament passages about the announcements of Christ’s arrival by John the Baptist and the Angels.

Advent devotions include the Advent wreath, which reminds us of the meaning of the season. The Wreath was created out of evergreens, symbolizing everlasting life in the midst of winter and death. The circle reminds us of God’s unending love and the eternal life He makes possible.

The Wreath has four candles. A new candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas. Each candle represents something different, although traditions vary. The four candles traditionally represent hope, faith, joy, and peace. Often, the first, second, and fourth candles are purple; the third candle is rose-colored. Sometimes all the candles are red; in other traditions, all four candles are blue or white. Frequently, a fifth white candle is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus’ birth.

In this coming Advent season, may you know God’s near presence. May you strive to share Christ’s peace. And may you be lifted by the words of the prayer: “Send us Now into the World in peace and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord.” Amen.



## **A LOOK BACK AT GRACE CHURCH HISTORY**

We are looking back into the files in the Grace Church Office to uncover more of our long history in preparation for our big celebration next year. To our surprise, we came across a file holding the original issues of the Angelus! The Reverend Frank H. Simmons was the Rector at that time and he was listed as the Editor of the monthly Angelus. The front page shows a picture of our church building as it is today.

In an issue numbered Volume 1, Number 2, dated December, 1929, was printed a story entitled “The Christmas Trail.”

Since this issue of the Angelus also includes preparations for our upcoming Christmas season, you might appreciate a “look back at history” as those long-ago parishioners would have prepared for their upcoming Christmas.

### **The Christmas Trail**

When the camels of the “Three Wise Men” shuffled the sands of the desert toward that beckoning Eastern Star, they blazed the first Christmas Trail ever known. Since that ride, the trail of the gift bearers has wound its way around the world.

Through the reeking jungles where the chimes are the tom tom of the drums, across the lonely prairie, over the ice packs of the frozen north, back to the home hearth, – wherever they may be – the bells signal the way across the Christmas Trail.

North or south, east or west – from whichever way the Christmas greetings echo – old friendships, old memories and good-will kindle their thrill in the hearts of men.

There is something very different about Christmas; a hush of nature, a changed atmosphere, a feeling of nearness to an omnipotent Power, a consciousness of the brushing of wings of invisible angels, something that says to us – this is the day! When God so loved the world that he gave His Son to be born for us.

How many Christmas mornings have we stood and listened to the music of the chimes and felt our hearts swept clean of all the old tangles and prejudices and hatreds and worries, and have known for a moment the lifting up of the soul out of the body; the exquisite peace that shall come when the door of life has closed upon us, and we take a long breath, and face the wonder of what lies beyond.

This is a divine day, it is not like other days. Out of the 365 casual, working-and-struggling days of the year, this one was selected as a distinct gift to the human race, a race that blunders and errs and yet, led by a blind yearning for the things it cannot express, manages to stumble forward and not back.

All things change. Cities and empires and races of people pass along the outward bound trail and over the horizon. But this day has not changed, not since the first Christmas – when its pageantry of immortal events moved across the map of hours and wrote its history with a flame of undying fire – the



light of a star. The things that marked that first Christmas of beauty and simplicity have remained the precious, the abiding things.

First—stars. How wonderful to choose a star and follow it! To fasten one's aspirations to the high, steadfast beam of it. And are we not, all of us, consciously or unconsciously, following some star of faith within – some little, living flame that guides us through the darkest moment and brings us out again upon the hilltops. And so, first, a shining guiding star.

Second, a lowly place, a manger. A place where lowly humble cows, driven by some tattered boy, perhaps, come home at dusk to shelter and to food. To a lantern and a kindly hand and warm straw. Simple, beautiful, homey things. Work and kindness, and thoughtfulness for others, and sweet sleep and quiet rest after toil.

Third, wise men. The thinkers; the ponderers. Those who send out their thoughts into the far spaces of time and place, trying to make for faltering, groping minds a path to move upon.

And last, gifts. Gold and frankincense and myrrh, laid on a humble floor at the feet of a little Child. The Divinest Gift of all time. Here is where the pilgrimage of the wise ended; here was the destination of the bright course of the star; here, the meaning, the answer, and the final revealment of all their searchings of ancient volumes of lore, their study of astronomy, of science and of history. A little Child wrapped in swaddling clothe,; a mother's face bending there. A candle flickering in the dimness, and the warm breath of the cows in their stalls, and Joseph with his kindly protection.

The Wise Men were wise enough to comprehend—and they offered their gifts and bowed their heads in the dust before this living symbol of the Word Made Flesh. And “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

What is essential in the human heart can never die. All the theories of the skeptics cannot change it. And even these themselves will in time come under the comforting knowledge of a Divine Love and of One Who Watches over us—and knows and cares.

This gift of love made to the world so many, many hundreds of years ago, stands by us this Christmas Day. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. We feel its sustaining power and beauty and strengthen and refresh our spirit by it and know that somehow, in spite of darkness and doubt and discouragement, all will be well.



## **One more year to go...**

**By Michael Heffner**

As I enter my final year of studies at divinity school, I will share that I would not have come this far without the support and prayers of my church family here at Grace/La Gracia. Father Adolfo has helped me navigate sometimes challenging waters, the Discernment Committee (George, Walter, Mary, Bill, Sam, and Marsha) have received my updates and refreshed me with their words of encouragement, and the individual members of this church have shown more love than I could have imagined was available for one of their own. These blessings are my strength.

I won't elaborate on too many details about school (I'm doing my best – and am trying to make a difference while I'm here) and would prefer to share the final sermon from my summer as an intern at St. Mark's Church, Mount Kisco. This is the church where my father served as rector from 1974 to 1986.

Peace and Love

Michael

### **The Transfiguration and Bombing of Hiroshima**

**August 6, 2023**

**Sermon**



In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

*(please be seated)*

As I prepare to head back to Yale for my final year of seminary, I want to acknowledge the collective effort and prayers of my extended family. My Grace/La Gracia and St. Mark's Church families. My Scarsdale and my Wall Street community families.

My brother, sister, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, and cousins in this country and abroad.



To my wife – who can claim most of the credit for my standing here before you – and my two sons – who have been such active listeners, supporters, and constructive critics.



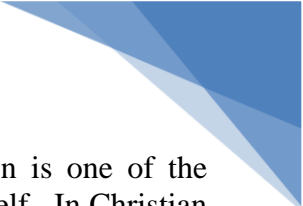
Even our doggie Halle has participated in this remarkable journey.

Kyle – you are a brave soul to have entrusted me with six of your precious sermon slots this summer.

I am profoundly appreciative of the work that you put into helping craft my message and helping me to try to keep seeking to reach higher.

There is a certain elegance to starting my summer sermon series here with the Holy Trinity and finishing with the Transfiguration.

Neither is easy to explain, and both lend themselves to going down the divinity school rabbit hole of deep theological unpacking. In the spirit of trying to stay connected with you, I will stay with the theme of “keeping it simple”. Transfiguration is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke and is understood to have been the revelation of the eternal glory of the second person of the Holy Trinity, which was customarily hidden during Jesus's life on earth. Many interpret Christ's revealing of himself to Peter, John, and James as a "preview" of his Resurrection appearance. Some may ask why we must have Moses and Elijah in this miracle story. Some would respond that their presence is a necessary part



of Christ's fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Transfiguration is one of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels and is unique in that the miracle happens to Jesus himself. In Christian teachings, the Transfiguration is a turning point moment with Jesus acting as the meeting place between the temporal and the eternal – the bridge between heaven and earth.

Much can be added, but this morning's scripture is well worth re-reading for all of the majestic details – Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and worship him upon his holy hill.

Rev. Kyle likes to call me a storyteller.

That is my preferred style of presenting the good news.

My stories today may be familiar to some of you who knew William and Naeko Heffner but have never been shared in the context of Jesus's miracles.

The connection that their narratives build between the Transfiguration and the bombing of the City of Hiroshima on the 6th of August, 1945, is an unexpected one but helped me to find the good news in events that seem so disconnected.

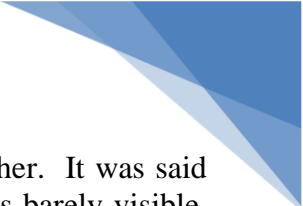
The Battle of Okinawa was the bloodiest of the Pacific War. It began on the first of April – Easter Sunday - with the idea that a successful campaign would set the stage for the Allied invasion of mainland Japan. The unimaginable loss of life in this battle provided an insight into potential losses if this invasion of Japan was to take place. President Harry S. Truman learned of the development of the atomic bomb and was forced to decide whether to use the bomb or proceed with the invasion. For their part, the Japanese strategy never called for stopping the Allies at Okinawa. Their intention from the beginning was to make the campaign to take the island so costly that the Allied Forces would have no choice but to sue for peace before continuing with further invasions on Japan's home islands. The losses to both sides notwithstanding, the Allies declared the Island of Okinawa secure on the 22nd of June.

An ultimatum was presented to Japan in July. The message was unambiguous; surrender unconditionally or face prompt and utter destruction. The Empire of Japan ignored the message.

After President Franklin D. Roosevelt passed away suddenly in April 1945, Harry Truman was installed in office. Truman had not been briefed on the development of atomic weapons. Still, he authorized their use after considering the estimated casualties to US service members in light of the tremendous loss in the Okinawa campaign.

The Army Air Forces delivered two atomic bombs to Japan. One was detonated on August 6 over Hiroshima, and the second on August 9. Emperor Hirohito announced the Empire's willingness to accept the terms outlined in the Potsdam Declaration. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945.

My father, William Heffner, was an enlisted US naval officer who joined the armed services while pursuing medical studies at William and Mary College. He was part of the Okinawa campaign's powerful Fifth Fleet Naval forces. He was twenty-one years old.



The massive loss of civilian lives in the Battle of Okinawa profoundly affected my father. It was said the area surrounding the island was so crowded with the naval ships that the water was barely visible. The subsequent dropping of two atomic bombs on the mainland cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to Japan's surrender and the end of the Pacific War.

When my father returned to the United States, he dropped his pursuit of a medical degree and dedicated his life to the service of God and the Church and became an Episcopal priest. His mission work brought him back to Okinawa.

The war experience revealed to my father his life path and where it would take him. The blinding lights of battle were transformative and guided him to his true calling.

During the ten years that he spent in Japan, churches were built, and the foundation for the Diocese of Okinawa was established through his work. The Gospel that he preached gave those recovering from the near-total destruction of the island courage to live and hope for their future.

William Heffner poured his passion into childhood education and established the Nazareth School, which has grown into several other schools and daycare centers. He helped build places where children could be nurtured in a Christian teaching environment. It was in Okinawa that my father met and married Naeko Yoshihira. Her tireless work in building Christian schools with my father left a lasting legacy. Their names are forever etched in the hearts of many people in Okinawa.

In many ways, their story is the bridge that connects the Transfiguration of Jesus narrative with the anniversary of the atomic bomb dropping on Hiroshima. Jesus revealed his glory to his disciples on the mountain through his transfiguration. The statement "listen to him" identifies him as the messenger of God.

**It is a turning point.**

The Battle of Okinawa was a revelation to the Allied Forces that the Empire of Japan would sacrifice all if further military invasions were allowed to proceed on the main islands. The revelation of the development of atomic weapons to Harry Truman and his calculation that lives might be saved with their use was revelatory.

**It was a turning point.**

The altering of my father's life path was revealed to him in the blinding light of battle.

**It was a turning point.**

The seed of Christian conversion for my mother was also revealed to her in the devastating loss she witnessed as a child of ten living on the island of Okinawa. My mother's story of her family being commanded by the Japanese military to commit "compulsory suicide" as an alternative to being captured by the Allied soldiers - and being saved when the hand grenade given to them failed to detonate is a miracle story. She grew to understand this more with the revealing of the Gospel by missionaries like William Heffner.





## **It was a turning point.**

Their work as Christians affected countless numbers of people in the aftermath of the destruction of Okinawa, in the missions that my father supported in East Asia and the United States, in their lives here at St. Mark's, in raising their children to support the church and their communities, and in helping to bring me to this pulpit to share my faith.

There is good news to be found in these turning points. I am grateful to God that - in my limited human understanding - I can find enlightenment on issues that engage the spiritual heart and challenge my faith. I ask for God's help so that we might be led to a place where responsibility for our actions is ultimately accepted in our efforts to repair this world.

In closing, I will ask you all to bow your heads for a moment and pray for peace. Let us lift our hearts and voices for peace – our guiding star and our most precious ambition.

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness,  
no strength known but the strength of love:  
So mightily spread abroad your Spirit,  
that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace,  
as children of one Being;  
to whom be dominion and glory,  
now and forever.

Amen.

# Lifting Up Westchester

## 2023 Student Essay Contest



### LUW Winning Essay Contest

The topic for this year's Lifting Up Westchester youth contest is "Mental Health and Homelessness" and it is one that presents challenges for all of us. And yet this topic was met head-on by 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders in ways that show a maturity of thought well beyond what we would expect of such young people. It is well worth our time to read what these students think about this timely and important topic. Reading their thoughts should also give us a wonderful sense of hope about the future that will eventually be in their hands.

Mental health influences how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Family illness, job loss, divorce, not doing well in school, being bullied, hunger, poor housing and becoming unhoused are just some of the things that can trigger mental health issues. This can result in emotions such as anxiety, depression, or loneliness. We have all certainly gone through the last pandemic years that have impacted all of us in ways that influence our mental health, and the most vulnerable among us may not have been able to survive.

As the CEO of LUW, Anahaita Kotval, has said: "Students shared deeply personal stories about their own challenges with mental health. But as they researched the underlying causes of homelessness, they learned that mental health issues are not the primary cause of individuals becoming homeless. With this knowledge, many of them suggested ways to help end the stigmas attached to both mental health and homelessness so that we can all work toward a better future for everyone."

This LUW Westchester essay contest is an annual contest that was established in 2017 in memory of Beth Massey Rubens, a 40-year resident of Scarsdale and lifelong teacher, tutor, and mentor who had a love for language arts. It is open each year to all students attending school in Westchester in the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades with winners in the four categories of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, and English as a Second Language. A panel of 49 judges select the ultimate winners and cash prizes are awarded.

**This year there was a tie for first place in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade category. We are publishing these winning essays by Kristen Luther and Agnesa Rraci.**



## The Connections and Misperceptions Associated With Homelessness and Mental Health

By Kristen Luther, Woodlands High School  
11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> winning essay and poem

### A Widow's Wish

Loneliness by nightfall  
But possibilities by day rise  
Read the thoughts of the widow  
Through the tears from her eyes


Glancing at the portrait  
Her beloved's eyes seem to stare back  
Memories of joy  
Before the devil's attack

Sitting at her dark window  
Hands interlocked  
Reminisces of his touch  
Before his breathing had stopped

One grant from God  
Is all she desires  
As her husband's presence,  
Is her wish to acquire  
She remembers the tragedy  
Her body still in shock  
But her mouth starts moving  
With her one wish in stock:

"May my life be taken, before I awaken  
For my husband and I, as we are forsaken  
One in the holy paradise  
And another on a terrestrial planet  
For both of us are old  
As igneous rocks like granite

For death by one's own hand is highly forbidden  
Overwhelm me with illness  
So I am bedridden  
For I am verklempt  
All emotions entailed  
With my promises of commitment



For a wife I have failed  
After my sickness  
Please heal me, my lord  
But not with my life,  
Rather my husband's presence aboard"

Her hands unclench  
With the hope of her prayer acknowledged  
Her life on earth shall surely be abolished  
Asking for death  
Her family shall disown her  
But nothing hurts more  
Than life as a loner

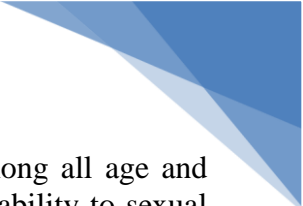
As she was told since a youngster: The sea has many fish  
But with her beloved's life gone  
Death is a widow's wish

A Widow's Wish highlights the immense sorrow expressed by a widow, after the recent loss of her husband. This incident has devastated her, contributing to her suicidal ideations and an overall decline in mental health. My poem aligns with the tragedy of loss, a significant setback in the lives of many. Whether it is a bereavement in the family or sudden unemployment; specifically, the loss of a stable home and the absence of a productive living environment is a detrimental occurrence, plaguing millions of individuals to this day. With the constant worry of safety, security, and overall financial distress, homeless communities continue to suffer from various mental health challenges that should never be unacknowledged.

Mental health is the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of our well-being. These qualities affect our thought processes, actions, and accomplishments. Our mental health status is fundamental to our growth and quality of life. Positively maintained mental health helps us to regulate our emotions, cope with stress, and handle life's challenges in a healthy and productive manner. Many suffering from mental health challenges often find it difficult to succeed in school, the workforce, long-term goals, and even the "simplest" of tasks, such as waking up in the morning. My personal experiences with a decline in my mental health as a young individual experiencing bullying throughout high school, have enhanced my understanding of others' emotions, psychological challenges, and the human mind itself. I believe that one's mental health is an essential aspect of their health overall. My belief has significantly affected the way I treat others, as I value their emotions in situations I may encounter with them. This advancement within myself has aided in my understanding of the challenges faced by homeless men, women, and youth across the globe.

In 2020, approximately 1,600 men and women were counted as homeless individuals in Westchester County, according to [westchesterindex.org](http://westchesterindex.org). Under these harsh conditions, homelessness has exacerbated mental illness and the development of chronic disorders. Mental health issues and homelessness go hand in hand as people conflicted by psychological trauma can experience homelessness, and those already homeless may suffer from emotional distress. While not all people with mental illness become homeless,



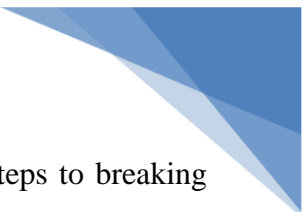


the correlation between psychiatric challenges and homelessness has been evident among all age and gender groups. A vast majority of homeless women have reported an increased vulnerability to sexual assault and physical violence. Similarly to men, alcohol, and substance abuse have commonly inflicted adults, offsetting brain chemicals including serotonin and dopamine. This deficiency triggers many of the mental disorders that have led to suicide. Homelessness has also been shown to be traumatic and detrimental, especially to children's development. Like adults, studies have shown that homelessness throughout youth is closely connected with social issues, anxiety, depression, and more. These challenges among children are deleterious to psychological growth and maturity, and can play a major role in a child's overall future success. Another group heavily afflicted with homelessness and mental health challenges is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning community (LGBTQ). Suicide attempts and ideations have reported to be 4 times higher than heterosexual youth. Overall, the tribulation of homelessness has significantly impacted, and continues to impact individuals from all walks of life.

Homelessness is caused by many circumstances, some even beyond our control. While the root cause of homelessness is poverty, there are various factors that lead to this dilemma. This may include exposure to trauma such as natural disasters, physical or sexual abuse, and more. Diagnosis of a physical illness or disability can also be debilitating to an individual. Referencing A Widow's Wish the loss of a loved one, through death or other circumstances, can lead to feelings of grief, sadness, and depression, therefore triggering occurrences ultimately causing homelessness. In Westchester county especially, the expensive and limited housing market continues to force families into homeless situations. Unemployment, low pay wages, and healthcare costs are other major financial components responsible for the increase in homelessness.

"Most homeless people are schizophrenic." "Homeless people need to fix their mental instability before being allowed in housing." These are just a few of the misconceptions of homeless individuals. Mental issues are a major stereotype of homeless people. Often misinterpreted as dangerous to society, the homeless community continues to receive backlash and is stereotyped on a day-to-day basis. Part of this is due to the obliviousness of their situations as well as a misunderstanding of their true identities. Often, homeless people are even blamed for the position they are in. Many view the homeless as individuals without a bright future, but this is completely not the case. An inspirational figure once a product of homelessness, Tyler Perry, lived on the streets of Atlanta, Georgia. Homeless and starving due to being evicted from his apartment, Mr. Perry used his past experiences of physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, to strive and become now one of the most prominent men in the entertainment industry. This constant negative perspective of homeless individuals dehumanizes and segregates them from the rest of humanity. Hate crimes, discrimination, and violence increasingly torment the homeless, as others fail to comprehend the circumstances of unhoused people. This in turn, further intensifies their mental health issues.

Many personal and global actions can be taken to end the stigma of homelessness. Educating yourself on the root causes of homelessness can help to dispel misconceptions. This may be through volunteering at homeless shelters or organizations that provide services to homeless individuals. These initiatives can help to build empathy and understanding. You can also advocate for change by supporting policies and programs that provide resources and support to homeless communities. Speaking out against negative



stereotypes and even educating others about the realities of homelessness, are major steps to breaking down the myths of those impacted by this tragedy.

It is important to address both the mental health needs and housing needs of individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Raising awareness of this worldwide issue can increase community involvement in providing access to mental health treatment and support. Organizations such as Lifting Up Westchester continue to accommodate homeless individuals through housing assistance, meal preparation, educational opportunities for youth, and job security. While many people suffering from homelessness may face isolation and loneliness, Lifting Up Westchester provides a sense of community and support while connecting individuals with various resources and services.

Reflecting on the adverse challenges faced by homeless individuals across the globe has enlightened me on the importance of pursuing assistance to change the lives of those suffering from homelessness. While I have always been cognizant of the issue of homelessness in my community and the entire world, my attitude has changed from just awareness to now empathy and support. I have discovered a new method of providing comfort to homeless communities through my writing and I hope to incorporate this in the near future. Small acts of kindness, such as offering a smile or a kind word, can make a big difference to those encountering homelessness. Together we can truly create a more supportive and inclusive society for all.

### **Mental Health and Homelessness**


By Agnesa Rraci, Woodlands High School

11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade winning essay

"Like you, I know people who drink, people who do drugs, and bosses who have tantrums and treat their subordinates like dirt. They all have good jobs. Were they to become homeless, some of them would surely also become 'alcoholics,' 'addicts,' or 'mentally ill'." – "Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women" by Elliot Liebow.

As a society we fail to recognize the importance of offering support to those who require it. Our culture does not address the problems that people are facing and only criticize them when they are struggling. It is a very hypocritical notion to perpetuate when there are many people who respond to trauma similarly but go unlabeled because their privilege and status protect them from scrutiny.

Mental illness is not the only reason for homelessness; poverty, gentrification, and pandemics are only some of the factors that play a role in homelessness as well. The societal isolation of homeless people is an extreme form of victim-blaming that humanity has adapted. Hannah Green, a previously homeless individual, sheds light on this issue by sharing her experiences with this stigma. In "What Being Homeless Has Taught Me About My Mental Health," Green writes, "Growing up I had this idea that people who suffered with addiction were bad people. But I have learnt that people who turn to drugs and alcohol have usually experienced unimaginable trauma" (Green). To better understand the issue of homelessness, it is important to realize that homelessness is a traumatic situation that may lead to mental illness through the stress it causes.




Although homelessness is not completely caused by mental illness, there are many instances where uncontrollable events can cause a decline in their mental wellness. For instance, in the article "Homelessness and Mental Illness: A Challenge To Our Society," Peter Tarr writes that, "An individual's mental illness may lead to cognitive and behavioral problems that make it difficult to earn a stable income or to carry out daily activities in ways that encourage stable housing" (Tarr). Any issue that is occurring in someone's life like: the death of a loved one, a pandemic, and postpartum depression are some situations that can create major hardships and intensify extreme stress, anxiety, or other mental health issues, which, in turn, increases the risk of homelessness.

I believe that although mental illness and homelessness are their own issues, it is common for people to dismiss homelessness as an unresolvable effect for mental illness. This behavior protects a capitalistic system that encourages poverty and exploitation instead of progression and care. America has perpetuated that our working and living conditions are superior to others and that those who cannot withstand or succeed in our society are weak despite the systematic obstacles that are built upon racism, sexism, and xenophobia. For instance, in "What Being Homeless Has Taught Me About My Mental Health" by Hannah Green, there is mention of weakness within mental illness. She writes, "I used to think crying made me weak, but I've realized that it doesn't. No one could be expected to go through the same as me and not cry" (Green). Crying being seen as a weakness is only one example of society's need to dismiss Americans' struggles.

In my opinion, dismantling the stigma around mental illness and homelessness is not as simple as building more shelters. It means the reform of the mental healthcare system, prisons, schools, food distribution, and the workplace. Prejudices that uphold capitalism begin in childhood and continue to impact the way that we interact with the world and each other. Bettering our education system would call for awareness of racism, sexism, and xenophobia being the foundation of many of our systems. Once this awareness is built, our society will be able to empathize and recognize issues like homelessness as deeply-rooted into our capitalistic view of prosperity. If we were able to follow a more progressive and socialist concept, similar to those in Western Europe, we would be one step closer to eradicating homelessness and its stereotypes.

Organizations like Lifting Up Westchester are essential in battling the stigma and existence of homelessness. Homelessness is a wide-spread and overwhelming issue that is exacerbated by misinformation and stereotypes. Educating students through projects like this one, allows our community to be exposed to the truths about homeless and mentally ill people being isolated and demonized. I'd like to thank Lifting Up Westchester for creating an opportunity for me to become more educated on homelessness and mental health, topics that I now feel everyone should be well-versed in. Through my research of this topic, I have learned about the complexities of mental illness according to the perpetuated notions of violence and laziness. To better understand these stereotypes, I had to examine societal expectations as they relate to our education system. As I've stated previously, education is key, however, we often fail to teach empathy to students. The isolation and lack of understanding of students with mental illnesses due to bullying, death of a loved one, or caring for siblings, is what worsens their situations and causes them to internalize the idea that mentally ill people are weak. Knowledge that is offered and shared through Lifting Up Westchester, for example, is what I believe offers the opportunity for students to learn and think outside of their own experiences.



With proper education of the topic, many people could come to realize that poor mental health does not automatically cause homelessness, however, it can contribute to societal isolation that may lead to homelessness. A fact that is not often recognized due to stereotypes, is that homelessness deteriorates one's mental health. I hope that through local organizations like Lifting Up Westchester, that our community is able to take the time to understand others and recognize their needs. Doing our part to uplift those who are underprivileged is what can create, not just a better future for our local communities, but for the world as a whole.

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[www.gracewhiteplains.org](http://www.gracewhiteplains.org)

Priest in Charge: The Reverend Adolfo Moronta

Editor: Mary Baker

Contributors: Mary Baker, George O'Hanlon, The Rev. Adolfo Moronta, Karen Odom, Judge Delores Brathwaite, Camille Worrel, Michael Heffner, Walter Simon, Carole Lashley, Ginger Waters

Distributor: Suzan Ortega-Collado