



Grace Note:

Dear family and friends of FUMC-Evanston,

I am on vacation, so this is a “Grace Postcard”. Unfortunately, I cannot say “wish you were here!” since the Coronavirus is on a rampage in my hometown of Meru, Kenya, sparing no one. Both my parents were hit hard during Holy Week and my Hosanna (save us!) on Palm Sunday was in desperation, wondering whether I would have to face a personal Good Friday. Mum and Dad are now out of the hospital and recovering at home under the care of the *Nurse Grace* that I have now become! My father tested negative and was strong enough to receive his first shot of AstraZeneca. My mother is still recovering her strength. Thanks be to God!

It is a pleasure to see Ministry at First Church continue at a healthy pace.

Worship Matters: In these strange times, remember to set aside Sunday mornings to “attend church”. I attend the First Church worship service on youtube and it is quite a different experience sitting in the metaphorical pew. I like it!

Denominational Matters: General Conference and the decision to split the denomination has been postponed to August/September 2022 in Minneapolis. Our Annual Conference will be held on July 16-17. The Pastoral Advisory Team (P.A.T) met last week with the Chair of the Northern Illinois Conference delegation to General Conference. I have invited PAT to give you an update in next week’s Grace Note.

Race Matters: Next weekend I will join David Cerra from the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) and Carol Barnet from Church Council as we attend the *Cross-Racial/Cross-Cultural Ministry Spring Training*. Although my appointment at First Church has been relatively smooth with only a few occasional bumps, it turns out our relationship is known as a Cross Racial/Cross Cultural Appointment (CR-CC). Apparently, it is not an easy appointment to navigate and not everyone can do it. Such an appointment merits a serious mention in our Book of Discipline, the United Methodist constitution which defines CR-CC as, “an appointment of a clergy person to a congregation in which the majority of their constituencies are different from the clergy person’s own racial/ethnic and cultural background” (para 425. 4). Even with the DS’ encouragement, I initially resisted our participating in the workshop. First of all, talking about race causes me great anxiety because it can move from systemic to personal way too fast. Secondly, I never intend to draw attention to the obvious, so I “let sleeping dogs lie”. And finally I wondered whether a CR-CC training three years in my appointment was too little, too late for all of us. Then I remembered that First Church has been bold in the conversation about race matters since 1855 when the

first African-American resident of Evanston, Maria Murray, came to Evanston as a free woman and joined the membership of First Church in 1859. The congregation was only 5 years old, so it's not a stretch to say that regardless of our demographics, CR-CC is in our DNA!

So I find myself excited about the upcoming training, curious to hear what we are doing well as a congregation and what we could do better, and eager to reflect with Church Council and SPRC on how we can be helpful to others navigating CR-CC appointments. We will make sure to report back to you.

Finally, I am looking forward to more rest after a very traumatic year, preaching online at The American Church in Paris on May 9th (and in person one day!), and going on a safari since the prices have been slashed due to lack of tourists. I do wish you were here! In the meantime, be on alert of email fraud and do not respond to any emails that purport to be from me. Forward such emails to Candi. Let me be clear: No matter how tough life gets, I will never ask you to send me money or gift cards or ask you to reply to some cryptic private communication. The funding of any project I get behind should go through the church.

Stay safe. Choose to be happy. You are BELOVED! Praying for you. Please pray for me.

Pastor Grace



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