December 2, 2014

Dear Grace Church Family and Friends,

A few weeks ago, there was a quotation circulating between clergy friends on facebook. The quote came from James Forbes, former Senior Minister of the Riverside Church in NYC, a bastion of progressive Christianity. Forbes said:

> *No one gets into heaven without a letter of reference from the poor.*

Those words hit me hard and caused me to pause, wondering if I was doing enough to earn my reference letter.

Caring for the poor, the hungry, the homeless is at the center of our faith. Two weeks ago, in our reading from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus made that very clear. Alluding to the Day of Judgment, he said:

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Some people believe those words to be the heart of our Christian message.

Here at Grace, the Outreach Committee is working hard to provide everyone in the parish with opportunities to serve those in need. Grace is such a vibrant place, full of caring people, that we can make a tremendous difference in the local and wider community.

As just one example of what we are doing: on the first Sunday of every month, we will be collecting donations for the Food Pantry at First Baptist Church is Silver Spring. **We are asking everyone who comes to church this Sunday to bring one item of non-perishable food**. Donations can be placed in the bins located in the narthex (church lobby) or the multipurpose room (where children's chapel takes place).

Imagine what a difference we can make if everyone in the church participates – we can help feed a lot of hungry people!

And maybe, just maybe, we can begin to make some headway on getting that letter of reference.

See you in church (and don't forget that one food item),
Andrew