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Note from Nora - March 16, 2018



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

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*Editor's Note:* This issue of "Note from Nora" features a reflection Nora wrote as part of Islington United Church's *Lenten Devotionals*. Take a look at the [whole series](#).

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*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

—[Ephesians 2:1-10](#)

“What is grace?” The question came from someone whose husband, an athlete and adventurer, had been diagnosed with Parkinson’s.

That was a couple of years ago, and the question has echoed in my head ever since. I am still trying to articulate a better answer than whatever I stumbled through at the time.

It was the source of the question that made it hard to respond to. I have done some thinking about grace. I am strongly attracted to the

idea that God's mercy, God's love, is there for those who deserve it but also those who do not deserve it. Even though I try to live as Jesus has taught us, I'm aware of the many ways in which I fall short, so it is comforting to know that God's grace is a gift, not something that we can earn. I give thanks for grace unearned.



But the question came from someone who lives a good life and who seeks to live by those same teachings. With her husband they have raised their family well, and are at the stage of sharing their busy lives with children and grandchildren. If you could earn God's grace, they would have earned it. They may have experienced grace in many aspects of their lives, but it is tough to see this diagnosis, and the starkly different future it holds, as a gift from God.

In the abstract, I can accept that without sorrow we would not recognize joy, or feel the full blessing of it. I can even understand that sometimes painful experiences present us with opportunities to grow. These understandings from my place of comfort are not really helpful as I try

to formulate a response.

The best that I can come up with is that grace is part of the mystery of God. It can be a blessing to receive things we do not deserve, but it can also be a hardship. Grace reminds us that we are not in charge. Through the joys of life, and through the pain, God is with us. We are not alone. Grace reminds us that we are not in charge.

Thanks be to God.

**Prayer:** Ever-present God, Thank you for being with us always and in all ways. We are ever grateful for your gifts of grace and mercy especially when life just doesn't make sense. Amen

Nora

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This message has been sent to subscribers to the General Secretary's Letter, "Note from Nora."

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