



# GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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*The Mission of Grace Church is to build, by the grace of God, a loving and joyful community which lives the gospel through worship, proclamation, and service to each other and to downtown Providence.*

## Grace Episcopal Church E-News

*Grace Abounds*

Christmas

2015

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### A Christmas Message from the Rector

On Thursday evening (or Friday morning, for some of you), as we gather together at Grace for our yearly celebration of the birth of Christ, we will hear from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2. This passage is one of the most familiar of the Bible to Christians the world over, with beloved words such as those from the angel to the shepherds abiding in the fields: "I bring you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David, a savior, who is Christ, the Lord."

Much *less* noticed or inspiring are these words a few verses earlier: "This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." You'll never see this verse as a stand-alone message on any Christmas display *anywhere*. *This* year, though, this verse tells us something very meaningful: The Holy Family was leaving their home in Syria (of which Judea was a constituent part in that census). And Matthew's Gospel tells us that following the birth of Jesus, Joseph - out of concern for the life of his new child - took the family out of the country and into Egypt. So, the Holy Family became refugees from Syria in a foreign land.

This year, as we continue to see the struggles of those fleeing the threat of violence in Syria, we should remember that our Lord himself was a refugee from the threat of violence in that very land. Of course, we ought to pray for and seek to help those who are in peril no matter where they are from or who they are,

but we have a *special* connection with the Syrian refugees, many of whom are Christians themselves.

This Christmas, as we give thanks for God's blessing in our lives, most especially the birth and life of God's own son, let us remember that we are celebrating with Christians across the globe, including those who are refugees and strangers in a strange land. And let us pray with and for them, and, if the opportunity is given to us, let us support them, that we might be able to say through our actions, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens." Because, as the Apostle Paul writes in that verse from his letter to the Ephesians (2:19), we are all "citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God."

Merry Christmas to you all,  
Jonathan +

### Spend Christmas at Grace



#### **Christmas Eve ~ Services at 5 PM and 10 PM**

*With Musical Prelude at 4:30 and 9:30 PM, featuring the Grace Church Choir and Soloists, with Organ and French Horn.*

#### **Christmas Day ~ Service with Carols at 10 AM**

Grace Church e-letter Administrators  
Grace Episcopal Church