

*My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.*

*James 1: 2-4*

This is my favorite passage, and it was the scripture reading for October 3, 2016 in *Christ in our Home*. October 3 is my birthday. I reread the passage while in my tent in the wilds of North Carolina (actually a vacant lot near the tracks in Lexington, N.C. with 1,000 of my friends) during the Mountains to the Coast bicycle ride. It was my turn to do Council devotions in October so I based them on the same passage. Two years as President had times of trials as Grace lost staff, the sanctuary had HVAC issues several times, sanctuary sound is somewhat of a trial for those of us with hearing loss, but I consider it joy having had the pleasure of filling the presidency for two years. I thank the Lord for term limits, however.

In 2016 the Call Committee was formed, and is nearing the critical stage where candidates for Pastor of Grace Evangelical Church are considered. My thanks go to Harry, Judith, Heston, Margaret, Paula, Nelson, Christy, and Riley for agreeing to serve as members and alternates. I pray for them daily and urge all members (and others) to pray for them too.

Having Pastors Larry and Norma has not slowed our progress. The Food Pantry is still passing out nutrition. The Scouts are still serving youth. Slade has the choir singing. Prayer Meetings are being held; Kim keeps the physical church in good order. English is being taught as a second language to people of many different traditions. Lots of other things are happening too.

The Church continues to struggle with its Sunday morning schedule. Council formed a team to once again discern the consensus of the Congregation. "Cottage" meetings will be held in 2017 to have more intimate small group discussions. I trust the Lord will guide us to His will.

The last two years have been a time of testing, but the Church Council and Congregation of Grace has emerged more "mature and complete." I have often heard the expression that the United States of America is a nation of laws—not of men. Grace is a church of God—not of personnel.

Mack