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## *Advent Grace to You!*

**The Very Rev. Samuel G. Candler**  
**Dean of the Cathedral**

The month of December did not begin very gracefully for me – contrary to my recent energetic encouragements for grace, and excellence, and hospitality!

I was asleep at 11:30 p.m., when suddenly our home telephone started ringing. So did my cell phone. It was my faithful colleague, Canon Wallace Marsh, who lives right next to the church in our cathedral residence. “Sam,” he said, “we’ve got a problem.” Of course, he would never call me if that weren’t the case; I am usually the last resort!

In my bed, still in a dark stupor having been waked up, I could hear something that sounded like a tornado warning in the background. I looked over at my wife, Boog, and exclaimed, “Those are the cathedral bells.” Yes, it was 11:30 at night, and the cathedral tower bell system had malfunctioned. The bells were ringing—loudly, as if proclaiming something; but I knew that no one would be happy.

I rushed to the church where the ever-faithful Wallace Marsh and David Rocchio already were. They were in the main sacristy control room turning off every switch they could find, to no avail. Meanwhile, they and I were receiving all sorts of Facebook inquiries, Twitter messages, and phone calls: “What’s up with the bells?” The bells were loud and incessant, everywhere. It was not a happy time, made even more daunting when we learned that the circuit breaker box which directly controls the bells is in the very top of the cathedral bell tower.

Have any of you ever climbed the cathedral bell tower at midnight? Even during the day, it’s not easy; it’s an all-fours scramble, with five different ladders! But trusty David and I did it; I daresay we did it in record time, too! Even after finding the correct box and flipping every switch, the massive weight of the bells (5,000 pounds – and loud!) would take some time to stop swinging. After about a minute, communicating with hand signals, we realized that the swinging had slowed. That moment was my moment of graceful Thanksgiving!

It was not a moment of excellence or hospitality, but it sure was a moment of grace. We spent the next several days apologizing profusely to our neighbors, who mostly accepted the event gracefully. Thus we began the season of Advent, once again learning about grace and excellence and hospitality; this time, the bells taught us. The Cathedral of St. Philip is a huge, and complex place – and a complicated one. Usually we get things right, and sometimes something goes wrong.

So it is that, at any moment of any day, our community is being called to grace and excellence and hospitality. And it takes work. It takes effort. It takes money. It takes resources. Yes, Jesus feeds us freely with grace! But our ministry in the name of Jesus Christ depends upon financial support.

We need your graceful and generous financial gifts again this December. The Cathedral of St. Philip receives its largest amount of our financial gifts during this particular month. As is customary this time of year, we are way behind. Sometimes, I wonder if we will receive enough to end the month gracefully. Maybe Mary and Joseph felt the same way; would they make it?

Like Mary, I believe that God will provide. God will provide the grace. But God will need to work through every person

reading these words. Please give generously this time of year. If you can, please give even beyond your pledge. Your faith brings new birth. In Jesus Christ, your faith brings grace and excellence and hospitality!

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Very Rev. Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral

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