



**Opening Ceremony and Orientation
Tuesday, September 4, 2018**

9 am – 10:30 am

Good morning Gryphons and welcome back to Grace! And a very special and warm welcome to our new students and their families. We are so delighted to begin a new school year with all of you. Last week, we had a lovely morning on the playground with our new families where I had a chance to talk to a few of our new students. When you are new to a place, you want to be reassured that it is friendly and a place you can settle into. I was proud to be able to share with them –that Grace is a place where everyone is friends with each other. It's a place where we care for another. Please be sure to introduce yourself to someone you do not know today – extend a hand and offer a welcome. This is how we continue to grow the “grace” we all love and know.

If you haven't had a chance to see our welcome board yet, please take a peek on your way to your classroom or as you depart this morning. We hope you enjoy seeing your teachers and administrators as young children. Be sure to read about the ways we loved to play when we were young and how we still keep that playful spirit alive today. We can agree that one of the ways we do that now is by being here at Grace with all of you. We look forward to sharing time in joyful and playful work throughout this school year.

We are offering a new mantra for this year, a theme – Practice Compassion. We look forward to diving into this mindset that will help us be kinder and more empathetic towards ourselves and those around us. We hope to cultivate a deeply compassionate community of learners. The very first step is to show compassion for ourselves and one we can do this is through mindfulness where we settle our minds and open our hearts. I am excited to begin this practice with all of you this year.

I want to take a minute to recognize a group of students who have belonged to this place longer than any others – the graduating class of 2019. Grade 5 – can you all please stand? You are the new captains of Grace. We will look to you for your leadership and we know that you will help to ensure that everyone here feels like they belong. Thank you to all of you!

And I want to end with some advice I offered last year – to all of our students. Bring your whole self to school every day, be inquisitive and contribute your heart and your wisdom to Grace. Trust that we all want to support you in your journey as a person in this world. Come to this place ready to offer yourself to the community. We will all be better if we each bring that self to school each day.

We have much to look forward to this year – our 59th as an Episcopal School in Maryland. And we are honored that you are in our family.