

HEAD OF SCHOOL FOUNDERS' DAY REMARKS / February 21, 2018

Approaching Founder's Day this year, I found myself thinking a lot about one of our actual founders. The first Head of Grace. Jane Wood was appointed in 1960, the year of Grace's founding, to lead a preschool with 24 students at the original campus on Georgia Avenue adjacent to Grace Episcopal Church. Some of you may have seen Ms. Wood's portrait as it hangs in the School's conference room. Jane Wood was Head of Grace from 1960-1986. She was the longest serving Head in our school's history with 26 years of service. Always considering what is best for Grace, she even hand-selected her successor, Carol Hjortsberg, who served from 1987-2000.

When I began my role as the newest Head of Grace a year and half ago, I thought a lot about Ms. Wood and who she was. I considered her legacy and the impact she has had on what we enjoy about Grace today. Even though Ms. Wood passed away some years ago, I found myself wondering what she would think about the Grace we enjoy today. I wondered, what would it be like if I could talk to her now? And so I decided to write her a letter. She won't have a chance to read it or receive it in this world, but by sharing it with all of you today, I hope it helps to bring her to life here this morning on our 58th Founders' Day.

Dear Ms. Wood:

I wanted to share with you just how honored I am to be the newest Head of Grace Episcopal Day School. There is no question that your legacy of leadership lives on in our halls even today. Since you served as the first head, some things have changed. For one, we are all together on one campus in Kensington. In fact, we are in the building you so wisely discovered for us back in the early 80's.

I love the stories about what this building looked like when you first took a tour with Bishop Wooten and Dave Williams. The building had been unused as a school and had become instead a haven for squirrels and raccoons! It took tremendous vision and an indomitable spirit to bring it back to life as a school home for all of us at Grace.

In reading the school's history, I also discovered that back when you were in your 20's you applied for a pilot's license! It makes me realize that you were indeed brave to your core. And it took a bold vision and a great deal of courage when you were head to be sure we were in a location that would be so fitting for our legacy as a school.

I love to glance at your portrait from time to time, Ms. Wood. You live on in our present Grace and in the work I do each day with our students, faculty, and parents. I like to think you are

looking down on us and that you are proud of all of us for maintaining a commitment to the essence of Grace that you cultivated in your time as the very first Head of School. Please know that we cherish your courage and vision for this wonderful school and on this Founders' Day, we are thinking of you and recommitting ourselves to the awesome mission to "provide every student the opportunity for academic excellence in a caring, nurturing, moral environment that embraces diversity and promotes creativity, self-confidence, and service to others."