

*God Sent Angels*  
A Sermon by the Rev. Philip Major  
St. Paul's ~ Syracuse, NY ~ October 18, 2026

It's important for me to participate in worship services every Sunday, because I have this terrible habit of forgetting the role God plays in my life. The hymn, 'Amazing Grace' is one of my favorites because, every day I need to open my eyes to the reality of God's grace in my life.

About 10 days ago I had an eye-opening revelation about the way God has been at work in my life. It was like a ray of sunlight began to shine through the window and I saw, for the first time, one of the ways God has been actively engaged in the world. In that ray of sunlight I began to look back at one memorable event, and then another, and another, and see God's role in each one.

It's not that I had forgotten the events. I will never forget the particular events. It's just that I never felt confident that God was actively engaged in each one of them. Before ten days ago, I remembered the stories, the people, and their actions, but I didn't see God's involvement in the stories.

One of these episodes happened six years ago. It was November of 2020. Do you remember what you were doing in November of 2020? I remember this time vividly, because during the first eighteen months of the Covid-19 Pandemic there was a succession of unexpected challenges for us. Inside St. Paul's, there were many challenges and there only four of us doing most of the leadership work in the fall of 2020. We were exhausted.

In the fall of 2020 we weren't gathering at the church for worship or for meetings. We weren't celebrating the Great Thanksgiving or distributing communion. Some people were dying, and other people were moving to be closer to family, and the church was always empty. We weren't planning Bicentennial concerts and events. In November of 2020 I wasn't even sure St. Paul's would still exist as a church in 2026.

Sometime in November, one of our members came to talk with me in the church office. This person asked a question that sounded small and simple, "Why don't I just start coming to the church office and see if I can find some ways to help for a few months?"

Of course, I said "yes". I didn't really understand what was being offered, but I was grateful. This person did not have a job description, and they didn't have an agenda. They were not trying to accomplish some sort of personal goal. They just offered to help with the work of the church.

After that, things began to change in the office. Not only did the new volunteer take on some tasks and projects that had been left completely unattended, they also brought spiritual and practical insights to the task of running the church. The work of keeping the church running began to feel less frantic, and more stable. The completely unexpected part is that this person is still there, working alongside Jim, Judy, Nicole and me as we try to support this busy congregation and keep this large building in good shape.

At the time, in November of 2020, I was grateful. I was grateful to the new volunteer who was helping so generously. For several years I referred to this individual as my guardian angel, but I said it in a way that was half joking and light-hearted. Now I realize it wasn't a joke.

Ten days ago, I began to realize that calling this person 'my guardian angel' was less of a joke and more like reality. God sent us an angel. God sent one of God's angels among us to support, encourage and guide us. I have no doubt this individual was sent by God, because they didn't have an agenda of their own. They were motivated only by their desire to make a contribution to God's work.

A similar sort of thing happened a year or two later. Once again, a member showed up in the church office. They had agreed to be part of something that was like a task force. There was a specific job that needed to be accomplished by the task force. But in the end, it was a task force of one person. The person who showed up in the office and said they would help was doing almost all of the work. They didn't complain or quit; they just did the job the best they could.

Once again, at the time, I was grateful to this person. They were tremendously generous with their time. They were very skillful in accomplishing the task that had been given to them.

All of this was true. There was just one piece of the picture I was not seeing. The part I did not see was that God sent that person into the church office. God sent yet another angel to guide and lead and support the work of St. Paul's Church. It was like God's love was born into the world again, taking on flesh in the life of this person.

It seems I should spend more time sitting in my office, because a very similar thing happened one or two years later while I was sitting in my church office. I was meeting with one of our members. I asked, "What is most important for you, here at St. Paul's?" This person responded, "I will be glad to help with anything you need me to do."

Once again, at the time I was grateful to this person. I was struck by the generosity of their offer. The remarkable thing is that, over the last three years, I keep asking the person to take on first one task, and then another, and then another. They always say "yes". For the past year or two I have been thinking to myself, "This is an unusual situation, to have someone who is willing to help in many different ways."

Now I realize, God sent an angel to St. Paul's, to guide and encourage and support our members and our work. This was a gift of God's grace, not the result of our efforts. Since that proverbial ray of sunlight first came through my window ten days ago I have begun to realize that God is indeed sending angels into my life and into our lives, not just once, but over and over again. I could tell several more stories like these.

For instance, there were the two women who came to church to accomplish a task earlier this year. There was a leadership task that needed to be accomplished, and no one was willing to take on the assignment. You see, we have a large building and a busy congregation and there are always many activities happening. All of our leaders, both staff and volunteers, have many tasks to accomplish. And there was a task that no one was able to take on.

So these two women arrived at the church and began their work. No one even asked them to take on the task, they just decided it was important for St. Paul's and they would take responsibility. In recent months the two women have worked on the task for fifty or one hundred or more hours. Sometimes they worked alone. Usually they worked together.

It was strange. They never complained. Very few people ever saw them as they were working, alone in the church. They seemed to be joyful as they worked on their task together. They were like girls at play as they worked together, often smiling and laughing.

Once again, I was grateful for these people. Now I realize there was part of the picture I was not seeing. I was blind in a certain way. There was someone else behind all of their work. God sent angels to work alongside us, to bear the load, to guide and encourage us. I am 100% sure it was God who sent them, because they never asked to be recognized. They did not do the work for their own sake, but for the sake of God's people. God's love was taking shape through their hands and words and actions.

This is true in your life also. God has sent angels into your life, to work alongside you, to bear some of the load, to guide and encourage you. You may not see them. Perhaps you are, like me, sometimes in the dark about the way God is moving in your life. But our inability to see does not mean that we work alone. God is sending angels into your life, individuals who are supporting or encouraging you, not for their own sake, but on God's behalf.

There is another side to the story of God's angels. There will be, or there has been, a time when God has sent you, or will send you, as an angel to work alongside God's people in the world. You might not feel you are up to the task. You might feel you are quite imperfect.

Your particular imperfections are not going to make much difference if God is sending you. God accomplishes God's work through us, feeble, imperfect agents. As long as you are willing to set aside

your agenda, as long as you are happy to serve without getting any credit for the deed, you are the perfect person for God to send. God is working miracles among us. God is sending angels to share the load, to encourage, to guide, to bring joy among us.