

Grace Notes

Volume II, Issue 5

November, 2019

Grace Episcopal Church

Grace Notes is the monthly newsletter for Grace Episcopal Church in Spring Hill. It is emailed or mailed to members and friends of the church and given to visitors and interested individuals. If you would like to contribute an article or comment, please reach out to a member of the Grace Notes committee: Carol Martinez, Pat Mayo, or Ed Strong.

It is the Mission of Grace Episcopal Church to bring glory to God, build the spirituality of our people, and bring Christ to our community.

Events and Dates of Note

Here are just some of the events scheduled at Grace. Please mark the following dates on your calendar. More information to come in the bulletin and the newsletter.

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| Dec. 1 | Advent I: 1st Day of Church Year |
| Dec. 6, 7 | Maury County Historical Home Tour visits Grace. (Grace contact: Alicia Fitts) |
| Dec. 8 | Advent Lessons & Carols, 10:00
Blessing of pledges and
celebration luncheon (11:15)
(Grace contact: Jessica Farmer) |
| Dec. 14 | Grace welcomes the participants of
the Spring Hill Christmas Parade.
(Grace contacts: Lynn & Bill Rieger) |
| Dec. 24 | Christmas Services at 5:00 p.m. and
9:30 p.m. (Carols starting at 9:30) |

Services and Continuing events

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| Sun. 8 and 10 a.m. | Holy Eucharist
(Children's Church at 10 a.m.) |
| 2 nd & 4 th Mon. | Creative Monday
1 to 3 p.m. |
| Tues. & Fri. | AA at 7 p.m. |
| Wed. Noon | Holy Eucharist with Healing,
Rite II |

The Vicar's Vagaries: Advent, Season of Hope

A swirl of activity surrounds me as I sit to compose a few words about Advent. I just took my dad to the doctor for a check-up late last week. I helped my son

get a major repair done on his car. I need to help my wife with projects inside and out at our home, and her computer just broke. Thanksgiving is Thursday, and we are going to be with family half the day.

Our mission council met last Wednesday night. Our stewardship campaign is well underway, and pledges are coming in. Soon, the New Year will be upon us, with a congregational meeting, election of mission council members, and perhaps a planning retreat a few of weeks after that.

Impeachment hearings have wound up, and we await the next steps.

In other words, life is going on pretty much as it always does.

Nevertheless, on Sunday, December 1, Advent begins, and with it, a new church year. In spite of all that we have going on around us and in our own families and homes, as the Church, we usher in the season named for the *coming* of the Messiah. I am certainly not talking about Christmas. That's the celebration of the birth of Jesus over 2000 years ago. On that great feast, we will celebrate the fact that our Savior has been born, along with the fact of the incarnation of the Word of God. But during the season that precedes Christmas and Epiphany, we will not be waiting for his birth. Most prominent during Advent is the message that our Lord is coming again. He has come, and he is coming. As children of Abraham by adoption, we sing "*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel/ that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear./ Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*"

While Advent looks forward to the salvation that Jesus will ultimately bring to all who accept his grace and love, the hymns and prayers of Advent include notes of sadness, incompleteness, and sorrow. This is so because, if we slow down long enough to feel our feelings and ponder our purpose, we may discover that, like the Jews in exile in Babylon, we long to go back home; and we want our home to be all that it should be. Nostalgia may deceive us into believing that what we really want is

the way things used to be, but in truth, we had the same heart-ache back in the good old days, too.

Our hearts ached then, as they do now, because we long to be at home with God in Christ. As Augustine has written, “Man is, in his way, a part of your creation, and longs to praise you....You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in you.” (*Confessions*, opening of Book One) Because our Savior came and is coming, because he comes to us in many ways in the time between, we live in hope.

Advent is the season of hope. Hope acknowledges that all is not now fulfilled. It makes room for sadness, regret, grief, and sorrow. But hope believes our situation will improve. Help is on the way. Hope trusts that the joy, health, peace, and security we long for is coming. Hope trusts that God has the power and the intention to establish and strengthen his kingdom among us, and that he will take us where he wants us to be forever. In the meantime, we have been entrusted with the message of hope for all the world. Let us therefore slow down, stop the noise, and feel the longing deep in our hearts. Our Advent longing will guide us safely to our true eternal home, and it is one of the best gifts we could share to those we love.

Faithfully,
Father Joe

Update from the Mission Council

As we approach the end of 2019, I would like to report to you that a lot has been happening at Grace. We have completed the member survey with a really good number of responses. Dave Thomas and Ed Strong have done a wonderful job putting the results into a useable format. We have been reviewing them and will present them to the Mission Council at the November meeting to begin the discussion of the results and develop responses to those results as warranted. I would to thank all of you who helped lead this effort, and especially those who displayed their interest in Grace by taking the time to share their feelings and desires in the survey. Stay tuned for updates as this moves forward.

We have reached that time we undertake our annual stewardship campaign. Many thanks to the committee, headed by Carol Martinez. Please give them your support as we go through this period of sharing our thankfulness for the bounties with which we have been blessed. This will culminate with the

blessing of our pledges and one of our wonderful luncheons on December 8th.

One aspect of stewardship that is often overlooked is the opportunity to give of your time and talents. There are many tasks and projects taking place at Grace that seem to “fly under the radar”. In other words, things just seem to get accomplished with little fanfare or recognition. In reality, we are blessed with a few faithful members who step up when they see a need. Volunteers are always welcome for assistance with the newsletter. Other possibilities are website items, Altar Guild, Christian Ed., building and grounds, and the list goes on. The point is, there is a place for you to serve. Don’t be shy about volunteering.

Another occurrence at our year end is change in leadership. There are always members who are completing their terms on the Mission Council, opening up the opportunity for others to experience the blessing of serving our Grace family. If you are approached about your possible interest in serving in this capacity, please give it your prayerful consideration. It is truly a privilege for which you will be greatly rewarded. If you are interested, please get in touch with Bill Rieger, myself, or one of the other Mission Council members for information on the process.

As we approach Advent, may the Lord bless each and every member of our Grace Church family.
John Harvey, Sr. Warden

Financial Update for November 2019

October was a much more typical month with expenses exceeding income by about \$2,100. We had an extra cost of a much-needed new office computer in this month.

Income	\$6,797.03
Expenses	\$9,925.05

Projections for the end of the year indicate we will have a \$6,000 deficit. That is better than anticipated but is not sustainable in the long run.

We continue to note that our non-pledged income is about half of what was budgeted. For the year, we are at \$4738 versus a budget expectation of \$9,000. October was back to less than half the budget expectation received. We will need to reduce our budget expectations for 2020 for this line item by about half putting more pressure on pledged income. Our current balances as of this writing (11/11) were \$8,010 in checking and \$82,774 in savings. Relevant to the savings, the Mission Council approved

reserving much of the Thompson estate funds to return our Organ and Building Funds to the pre-multiple transfer levels.

Here is the current breakdown:

Saving Acct - \$82,774

Organ Fund - \$23,500

Building Fund - \$42,000

Large Pledge - \$1916 reserves

(We hold money in savings from large lump sum pledges and transfer an amount each month into the operating fund.)

Residual Saving \$15,358

(This is the amount we technically will have available to borrow from in 2020 without action by the Mission Council.)

We received 44 responses to the survey. That is a fantastic response rate. Thanks to all who filled out the survey. The Mission Council will get a first look at the results of the survey at its November meeting and will discuss formats and options for providing feedback to the congregation so that the information gathered can have the most impact. Stay tuned for updates as we proceed.

Ed Strong, Treasurer

Turn on the Lights

On Sunday, Dec. 1, after the 10 am service, volunteers are needed to help decorate Grace for the Christmas season. Lights will illuminate the church both outdoors and indoors. The Christmas tree in Faith Hall will feature handmade angels. For more information on this activity, please reach out to Lynn or Bill Rieger.

Poinsettias Bloom at Grace

Poinsettias will once again decorate our church during the Christmas season. The plant's association with Christmas began in Mexico in the 16th century. Dec. 12 is National Poinsettia Day.

Linda Colmore and the Altar Guild are accepting donations for the flowers. The money is due by the third Sunday in December (Dec. 15), when the flowers will be placed in the sanctuary. Everyone contributing who wants to make a dedication needs to contact Susan Browning, office administrator, with that information so it can go into the bulletin for Christmas Eve.

For more information, please contact Linda Colmore at 615-403-7498 or lcolmore@aol.com.

Holiday Giving Assists the Community

This year the congregation of Grace Episcopal Church will continue their annual tradition of participating in the Center of Hope Christmas Program. We have adopted three families and are gathering gifts on their wish list. The gifts will be delivered unwrapped to allow recipients the pleasure of wrapping the gifts. All items are to be newly purchased and unopened. Gifts need to be at Grace by Dec. 8. For more information, contact Richard or Marsha Hawarah.

Center of Hope, located in Columbia, is the only agency in Maury County that is dedicated to combating domestic abuse, sexual violence, and stalking. Services range from crisis intervention to long-term case management. The Center of Hope staff thanks everyone for their consideration and adoption of their families.

By Carol Martinez

Christmas Parade Hospitality set for Dec. 14

The Spring Hill Christmas Parade will be on Saturday, Dec. 14 on Main Street. As the parade passes by Grace Church, we will welcome parade goers to visit our church. Hot chocolate, cider, and cookies will be served. Children may participate in crafts. Grace members walk part of the parade route encouraging visitors to enter the red door and visit our church. Last year we welcomed 30 visitors to Grace during the event. Volunteers should arrive at 3 pm to get a good parking space. The roads around Grace will be closed beginning at 4 pm. The Parade is scheduled to start at 5 pm. For more information, contact the Riegers.

By Carol Martinez

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