

# Grace Notes

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Volume III, Issue 6  
February, 2020  
Grace Episcopal Church

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**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.

Feb. 23	Bishop's Visitation
Feb. 23	Last Sunday after the Epiphany
Feb. 25	Pancake Supper
Feb. 26	Ash Wed. services, noon & 6:00
Feb. 29	Lenten Quiet Day, Diocesan House, spons. by DOK and ECW, open to all.
Mar. 4	6:00 p.m. Lenten Series, Wednesdays through April 1.

## Services and Continuing events

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

## Vicar's Vagaries: A Year for Trying New Things

*Vicar's Report, Annual Meeting, January 12, 2020*

Every year in the life of a congregation has its own unique qualities. 2018 was a good year for baptisms and bringing in new children. In that year we reached an average Sunday attendance of 53. 2019 was a good year for confirmations. We had five members confirmed on February 17, 2019: Tiffany Henderson, Jana Balke, David Thomas, James

Dallas, and Skyler Turner. These five new members all bring wonderful gifts and interesting personalities to our congregation. I thoroughly enjoyed helping them prepare for confirmation in the course of several Saturday mornings when we met at the church for our inquirers class.

In general, it was a good year for trying new things. Two of our members attended Cursillo last October, Sheila Flynn and James Dallas. Creative Mondays began meeting two Mondays a month with the leadership of Pat Mayo and others. Cheryl and Marty Cline have begun serving again as Eucharistic ministers. They extend the boundaries of our church by taking communion from our altar to people who are not able to come to church on Sundays. Through the persistence and gentle determination of Carol Martinez, *Grace Notes* started up again and is sent out most months in a very simple format.

One of the most important new things we did last year was to form a taskforce to study our budget and think of ways to help our church grow in membership and in attendance. I believe only the Holy Spirit makes the Body of Christ grow, but by our baptism, we have been commissioned as ambassadors for Christ, and ambassadors are the ones who are called upon to reach out to people and receive them in the Spirit of God and in the name of Christ. At a time when many people are moving into Spring Hill, we hope our church will grow in membership and in ways we serve God and his people.

Our attendance declined in 2019 so that our average Sunday attendance was 45. Several people had to move away due to their job situations. Some are retired and have travelled a lot. Others have been injured or sick, while a small number decided to attend other churches. These things happen in churches. But at Grace Church, we hope to resist the trends of decline. The most important things for us to do are to love, worship, and obey God, love our neighbors as ourselves, proclaim the gospel of

Christ, attend to the needs of our congregation, deepen our prayer lives, continue our study of scripture and the teachings of the Church, teach our children in the way that they should go, and help the needy as we can in our community. If Grace Church fans the flames of the sparks the Holy Spirit ignites, more people will want to be part of this small part of the Body of Christ.

Having said that, we need to pay attention to what it is like for a new person coming to Grace. We are a warm and welcoming place, but it may be harder than we think to become incorporated into the life and ministry of the church. We are nice to everyone, but some people seem to catch on, get involved, and stay; while others visit a few times and then drift off. How can we help more people stay? Are there things we can do to reach more of the people who would love to be members of Grace Church if they knew about us?

These are the kinds of questions that a group of Grace members reflected on last winter and spring in a few meetings. Immediately, we refurbished our newcomers ministry. Richard Hawarah, helped a great deal by his wife Marsha, has taken the initiative on this important matter. If you started attending Grace Church since the beginning of last year, please raise your hand. We welcome you, and we would love to hear what you have to say about anything we could do to help new people become a part of the congregation.

This new task force did a lot of brainstorming. I believe their openness to trying new things has affected the attitude of the whole congregation. I myself have tried several new things in an effort to do the things I do better than I did before. I attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> Williamson Unite Prayer Breakfast on October 21, and I got to hear representatives of many different faiths speak on the topic of how God's love brings different people together. I also made a new friend, Peri Chinoda, who serves as pastor of the Mt. Hope Baptist Church diagonally across the street from us. I only met two people, and the first person I met introduced me to Peri. I can't believe that meeting him was purely coincidence. We have had lunch, and I hope we will get together again soon.

Another new thing that we have tried has been the parish survey. We have harvested several ideas from your response to the surveys, and we will meet as a mission council to consider the survey results and plan for the future in February. One result

you have already experienced is that we have made changes in the way we pray the Lord's Prayer at the 10:00 Sunday Eucharist. Also, I have begun preaching from the floor of the nave with a bare minimum of notes. If you are not afraid I will get lost in a sermon, then I guess I shouldn't be afraid either. I enjoy the improved connection with the congregation, and I find that I cannot preach on anything too complicated to hold in my head. That's probably a good thing.

Also new at Grace is the re-created website. It is still new to me and most of the people on our mission council. The content needs work so that it more accurately represents who we are as a congregation, but I think you will like it if you find it on the internet. And I have finally learned which Facebook page is the public one we use. It is Grace Church SH ([www.facebook.com/GraceChurchSH/](http://www.facebook.com/GraceChurchSH/)). I think it was due to some Facebook ads that Carol Martinez put up before Christmas, combined with two well-placed signs given by Susan Austin announcing the times of our Christmas Eve services, that resulted in our church having about a 33% increase in attendance at the Christmas Eve services this year. So there are people out there who need a church to go to, and if they find out about us, some of them will want to come to Grace. Let's all resolve not to hide the light of our church under a basket in the coming year, but to let the light of Christ shine forth from Grace Church as much it is in our power to allow.

I always need to thank so many people, and I beg your forgiveness if I forget to mention you. Thanks to Deanie and the choir for all the hard work you put in to bring joy to our services and glory to God. Thanks to Linda Colmore and the altar guild for setting up and taking down for our three regular services per week. Linda always thinks of what we need when we need it, so I am free to work on other matters. Thanks to John Harvey, our senior warden, for his help in serving the best interests of this congregation. Thanks to Bill Rieger, outgoing junior warden, for tending our building and grounds so faithfully; and thanks to Lynn for leading our children's church and the volunteers who work with our children with so much love and care. Thanks to Susan Browning who really does love this church and does what has to be done, no matter what. I am so grateful to her for staying with us since I invited her to in April of 2017, my first month at Grace. I appreciate Cheryl Cline and Toni Strong, past and

current presidents of the Daughters of the King, and Sheila Flynn, current vice-president, and all the Daughters. Their ministry of prayer is always there when we need it, and often when we don't know they are there. Thanks to Ed Strong for his work as treasurer, and for recruiting such a good assistant treasurer in David Thomas. One great virtue of a thriving church is that the leaders there bring new people into leadership, and Ed is doing a fine job of this.

Thanks to Kala Fawbush for suggesting ways we could do things in a different, and perhaps better, way to reach the people beyond the walls of this church. We all appreciate the help Jessica Farmer has provided to keep our hospitality ministry organized and fruitful. She has good helpers, but they do need someone taking the lead so we don't all bring pea salad when the bishop comes, though Les Bennett wants it known that he would be fine if everybody brought brownies.

Thanks to Bryan Young, whose help I always appreciated, especially with special services such as Maundy Thursday. Bryan has just resigned as verger at Grace and requested that we transfer his membership to St. Peter's, Columbia. We will miss him, but we wish him well. I am sure he will find ways of serving faithfully wherever he goes.

Thanks so much to Susan Austin for all she does to record the minutes of the mission council and keep our records straight. Thanks to all of you for allowing me my unceasing devotion to what used to be called simply "commas separating items in a series," but now has been given the name, "the Oxford comma." You can call it what you like, but leaving out that comma for items in a series can form habits of such laxity that it can eat away the moral fiber of your soul like battery acid. Yes, thank you for putting up with me and all the things I think are important, as well as the things we all know are important in our service together in the kingdom of God.

Let us keep on doing the same old good things that have always sustained the life of the Church; and let us continue to be creative and strategic in the new things we decide to try for the sake of God's kingdom.

Faithfully,  
Father Joe

## **Financial Update for November 2019**

### **Grace Church Financial Update**

The end of year financials are still being developed. Here is an overview based on our bank records and reflecting some adjustments for 2020 payments made in 2019.

End of 2018	End of 2019
Checking Acct \$7,800	Checking Acct \$11,125
Savings Acct \$20,200	Savings Acct \$77,000

### **Points to Keep in Mind**

We had an enormously generous and blessed 2019 donation to the church from the estate of Margaret Thompson, a friend of Grace from many years ago. That was about \$67,000. We had a very healthy end of December 2019 deposit of more than \$11,000, covering some solid regular giving and the Christmas offering. The Christmas Offering is estimated to be about \$1,350.

We have had to dip into savings in 2019 for \$9,000 to meet our ongoing expenses. Our purposed budget for 2020, yet to be formally adopted by Mission Council, expects expenses to be \$122,290 for 2020. That is a flat line budget only reflecting increases where we have no control, e.g., health insurance costs.

Unless we increase revenue more, we expect to have to take another \$17,000 - \$20,000 from savings in 2020. That would exhaust our uncommitted savings account money. Most of that account is devoted to the Building and Organ Funds. But note, in 2019 we expected to have to take \$12,000 in and we only took \$9,000. Anything can happen. It has been a pleasure to serve. We may be a small church, but we are a great one.

By Ed Strong, Treasurer

### **2020 Stewardship Report**

To date Grace has 32 Pledges for 2020 compared to 36 in 2019. We have \$92,500 committed now and the potential for another \$7,000 to \$10,000 more. While the pledge drive is officially over, we never close the books on additional pledges and will continue to work to seek additional support throughout the year. A big thank you to the entire congregation for its support of the church in 2019. A special thank you to Susan Browning, our office manager, for her ongoing assistance.

By Carol Martinez

### **Get involved in a ministry at Grace**

Many opportunities are available for people to get involved at Grace. Here is a list of some of the different ministries and the person you may contact to find out more about each opportunity.

Looking for something “Behind the Scenes”?

Altar Guild – Linda Colmore

Yard and building maintenance – Bill Rieger  
or Susan Austin

Assisting Susan Browning (our office  
manager)— fold bulletins - Susan  
Browning

Serve on a committee – John Harvey

Visitation of the homebound – Fr. Joe

How about something more “Out Front”

Lay Reader , Crucifer, or Chalice Bearer –  
Fr. Joe

Children’s church volunteer – Lynn Rieger

Choir member – Deanie Moore, our organist  
and music director

Taking part in our community events

Creative Mondays – Pat Mayo

Divine Swine – John Harvey

Spring Hill Art Walk – Pat Mayo or Carol  
Martinez

Christmas Parade – Lynn Rieger

The most important way to get involved is through  
prayer!

### **Le tour du jardin par l’enfant**

In the springtime, several years ago, Mother told Boy to go and plant begonias and impatiens in the garden at Grace before the rains came. Boy loaded his Red Flyer wagon with topsoil and tools, and piled on the flowers of red, yellow, and blue. First he came to Welcome Garden where Robin was perched in the bath. “I’ve come to plant flowers here” he said to the bird. Robin said “You mustn’t. You see this garden is full of laurel and roses. There is no room for your annuals here. Take them to Alcove Garden down the path.”

Boy wheeled his wagon to the alcove where amid hostas and hydrangeas he found Hoot Owl listening to hymn 405, heard from the organ through the thin wall on the side. Of course Hoot Owl was wise, as his type tend to be. He took one look at the wagon and set forth a stern decree. “I rule this garden and not one annual shall there be! Take your wagon to the end, past Burning Bush, and round the corner to Circle Garden, the largest of them all.”

At the edge of Circle Garden, the largest garden of all, Boy encountered Mole pushing dirt out of a hole. (To make a mountain out of a mole hole.) “I would like to plant my begonias and impatiens lest I make my mother mad” said Boy to Mole. From atop his latest mountain, Mole surveyed the garden and said “Let’s go see. I think there is a place over yonder where your flowers we might sow.” They wandered through the heirloom peonies planted as a wedding gift long ago, into the forest of Black-eyed Susans, and out the other side, where suddenly Mole’s eyes saddened. I thought there might be room on either side of the cross, but from bulbs of daffodil and iris, whose flowers you don’t always get to see, grew sword like stems, thick as the olives at Gethsemane. “Boy, I’m sorry,” Mole sincerely said. “It is true this garden is the largest, but there is no room for you. For your flowers you must find another bed. Go to the garden next door and seek Snail, for she might have the key, to a fertile plot of land where blooms can ever be.”

Snail saw Boy coming with her periscoping eyes. She admired all the colors of the flowers within the terracotta pots, but said, “Nothing will grow on this Pebble Beach, ‘cept two tubs of ivy and a fountain concrete. You know the soil is cement. The roots will never take. I really like your flowers and want to help you plant them, but this is my lament.”

So on Boy went again with his wagon in tow. He stumbled into Memorial Garden where, dejected, he sat on a rock—when who should come along but Rabbit, whistling a melancholy song. Boy burst into tears as he began to tell his tale of woe. How with his wagon from garden to garden he’d go. But quickly said Rabbit, “Shhh! We must be quiet here! People come here to remember and pray. Don’t you see the Weeping Cherry tree? So bow your head and go.”

The early afternoon was growing warm when Boy entered Azalea Garden. Four or five azalea bushes stood betwixt tall evergreen shrubs. Empty space abounded, and dirt aplenty. Squirrel came scurrying to Boy to see what was about. But seeing no forage, Squirrel hastened his retreat. Boy yelled, “Squirrel don’t you run away! Help me plant my flowers and I’ll treat you to acorns today.” “Boy don’t you know? Azalea’s pink blossoms are so revered, they planted pyramidal sentinels to guard each flank and keep the interlopers clear. This is no place for your flowers. Go on, move about. Try the Girl Scout Garden across the walk and lawn.”

Who knew so many gardens at one small church exist? The Girl Scout Garden occupies space supreme, but only dense cedar ground cover does it grow. It would seem to be quite simple, but it is hiding secrets like plastic Easter eggs from 1993. Crow flew in and boy recounted his refrain of wanting to plant flowers before the evening rain. Boy said, "This garden looks great with its cover so low." But Crow said, "It's too thick and coarse for your fragile flowers to grow. But I know a place beneath the tree I call home. Turn around and Majestic Maple you'll see. Under its limbs, a garden exists where you can plant your begonias and impatiens. Flowers of red, yellow, and blue will bloom in splendor for all to see. Spring and summer blooms abound, until the cool of autumn, yield their blossoms to the fiery colors of the leaves of Tree."

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**Clergy and Staff**

The R. Rev. Dr. John C. Bauerschmidt, Bishop  
The Rev. Joseph N. Davis, Vicar  
Deanie Moore, Director of Music  
Susan Browning, Office Manager

**The Mission Council**

John Harvey, Senior Warden  
Susan Austin, Junior Warden  
Jessica Farmer, Parish Life  
Mark Henderson, Communications  
Richard Hawarah, Community Outreach  
Diann Schneider, Education  
Ed Strong, Treasurer  
David Thomas, Assistant Treasurer  
Michele Gibson O'Grady, Clerk