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Grace Notes

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May 2020

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, Peggy Roberts, 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 Notes

Here are just some of the dates to note on the church calendar. Please mark the following dates on your calendar. Information on activities and programs at Grace will be sent to you via email and Facebook.

May 16	Grace Episcopal Church consecrated 1878
May 21	Ascension Day
May 31	The Day of Pentecost: Whitsunday
June 1	The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin

Services and Continuing Events

Sun. at 10 a.m., Online Eucharist Via Facebook Live
Sun at 11 a.m., Coffee Hour Via Zoom Live
Tues at 10 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom (5/26)

The following services and events will resume after the statewide quarantine ends:

Sundays at 8 and 10 a.m., Holy Eucharist
(Children's Church at 10 a.m.)
(Class for children age 9 and above, Third Sunday of each month, 9:30 to 10 a.m.)

Wed. Noon Holy Eucharist & Healing, Rite II
2nd & 4th Mon. Creative Monday, 1 to 3 p.m.

Vicar's Vagaries

May 14, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we hit the mid-point in May, I look back on the last two months as a unique era the life of our country, the history of our congregation, and in my own life. In these past two months, I have asked people *not* to come to church, and I have indefinitely postponed the baptism of a baby. I prayed for a church member as he had surgery, but I did not go visit him at the hospital or at his house. I have invited people to attend our church from all over the country and the world, though it was not an in-person service I was inviting people to attend. I have preached to a bright dot on a cell phone about 15 feet away and felt as though I were talking into the emptiness between our solar system and another solar system many light years away.

I have learned to appreciate as never before what Susan Browning and other helpers have done to prepare service bulletins, records, and communications with the congregation. (Susan is still our bookkeeper, but she is no longer preparing bulletins or email for us.) I have taken great joy in brief conversations with strangers at the grocery store, and I have missed talking with the people I have come to know and love at the altar and parish hall of Grace Church.

We have held our first mission council meetings and coffee hours on a computer, and we have been glad to be able to do it that way. We have noticed the world of nature come alive in the early spring, with the birds singing in the rising of the sun, and the new growth and flowers coming out all around us. We have kept a Good Friday that felt like the whole world was suffering with Christ; and while the death

rate continued to climb, we looked with hope through the calendar date of our Easter celebration to the eternal resurrection from the dead that Christ's own Easter victory makes possible for all the children of Abraham. I have begun leading Bible study again, as I used to do for most of the years of my priesthood, and it has felt to me as though finally I am getting to do what I have missed most for the past 7 years.

What is the cutting edge of your growth in the time of the coronavirus? Mine may be a matter of attention. I am trying to learn to pay attention to fewer things. Allow me to explain. The other day, after a rather strenuous period of work, I sat down and turned on the Tennis Channel, my favorite form of relaxation. I saw Roger Federer playing Rafael Nadal in a replay of their 2017 Australian Open Finals match. I was thinking, "This is so good! I want to make this better! I will get some chips and some salsa, and maybe some cheese and nuts...." But then I stopped myself and said, "No. I will just sit here and watch one thing. I will pay attention with all the focus my eyes and ears can bring to bear. This one little experience is good enough that it doesn't need anything else to make it better." And it was much sweeter because I sat still and gave Roger and Rafa my full attention. When Roger won, I was present, even though it happened three years ago.

I am trying to do the same in my prayer life, and in my relationships with people, and in my walking, and in my working. Can I accept a simpler way of focusing my mind? While less is going on in our world, we are being given a golden opportunity to pay attention to what is in front of us, and to accept it as the gift it is. Let us say with God our creator, "Behold, it is very good!"

Faithfully,
Father Joe

Milestones Missed in May, and the Way Forward

As we make our way through May in this totally abnormal year, I hope this finds you all well. Typically, spring brings us an upgrade from the winter doldrums. The landscape takes on color as different plants begin to bloom, and improving weather prompts us to take up more outdoor activities. May is a month when we are usually

spending time together as a church family celebrating two events that are very meaningful to Grace. I have been asked by several of you about the first of these. Divine Swine is normally held the first Saturday in May. As you know, we are blessed to have many of you volunteer to help in all the work (and fellowship) that goes into pulling off our largest fundraiser of the year. When it became evident that Covid-19 was not going to allow us to meet safely on the scheduled date, and after consultation with incumbent Pit Boss Sam Isbell and other members of the team, I informed Fr. Joe we were calling off the event. It is my sincere hope that we might be able to reschedule it later this year, perhaps in conjunction with another celebration. If any of you have suggestions, please speak up.

Another date of note on the Grace calendar for May is the 142nd anniversary of the consecration of Grace Church by the Rt. Rev. Charles T. Quintard, Bishop of Tennessee, on May 16, 1878. In the past we might have celebrated this event with food and fellowship after the service. I assure you I will miss that, and I know each of you feel the same. Again, I hope we can schedule a makeup date in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, please stay in contact and support each other. Rest assured, your Vicar and Mission Council will be hard at work digesting the guidance from Bishop Bauerschmidt, sorting through the challenges particular to our Grace family, and putting together a plan to move forward to that day we can begin worship together under the same roof. We will certainly be taking tentative steps initially, and things will most assuredly look different for a time, but we will walk that path together. I ask for your patience, support, and indulgence. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

Christ's Peace,

John Harvey
Sr. Warden

Financial Update for End of April 2020

We had a very good April, as you can see below. This is the best month so far this year. And we did it all while worshipping virtually. We did not have an Easter offering this year due to the necessary suspension of in-person meeting. We should take

heart in what we were able to do in very tenuous times. We also remain in a good cash position as you will note.

Bank Balances as of 5/6/20

Checking	\$7960
Savings	\$79900
April Income	\$8447
April Expenses	\$8797

We have available the technology for on-line giving. Currently our on-line giving accounts for about 20% of our income. Using that method of giving is quite safe and would be greatly appreciated. You do it through Realm or using the URL code found at the end of this newsletter. If you are able, keeping up your pledge helps us be able to continue all new ways of worshiping.

We know that, for many, these remain very uncertain and tough times and our prayers and hearts continue to be with every one of you.

Ed Strong
Treasurer

New Act Offers Giving Incentives

Grace Episcopal Church depends upon generous donors to support our mission and ministry. Stewardship can be deeply spiritual, rooted in a desire to reorient our lives towards God, but it also has a practical side. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) that was signed into law on March 27, 2020 includes several provisions that may affect charitable giving during 2020.

Beginning in 2020, individuals can deduct \$300 in charitable contributions from their gross income even if they do not itemize their deductions. Donations must be made in cash to a charity.

Donors who itemize their deductions can usually deduct cash contributions up to 60 percent of their adjusted gross income. For 2020, that cap is lifted and donors contributing cash to a charity may deduct up to 100 percent of their income. This presents a significant tax savings for those who can contribute larger amounts and may be useful for donors with unusual income in 2020.

Also, the CARES Act eliminates required minimum distributions (RMDs) from many retirement plans in 2020. Some donors use their RMDs for tax advantage charitable gifts by making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) directly to a charity. This is another way for donors to make gifts to the church.

The CARES Act is a complex new law. Donors may want to consult with their own professional advisors before making a gift.

Keep Singing Your Faith

One of the things I have missed the most during this time of quarantine is singing hymns together on Sunday morning. Playing, singing, and hearing our songs of faith brings me comfort, encouragement, joy, and strength.

During this difficult time, I have been using my phone to continue singing these wonderful hymns, and I encourage you to try this on your phone or computer. The easiest thing to do is to go to YouTube, and search for a favorite hymn. You will find many performances – pick one and sing along! Some of them will have the lyrics on the screen, which makes it easier.

Another site to look up is hymnary.org. Along with reading the text and hearing the tune, there is a wealth of information about the hymns themselves – the authors and composers, etc.

On Sunday, May 10, I played “Now Thank We All Our God” for the postlude. The words were written by a Lutheran pastor named Martin Rinkart in the 1600s, during a time of plague and war. Despite having buried over 1,500 of his townspeople in a year, including his wife and several children, he wrote these words in gratitude to God for all His blessings. These words are a beautiful reminder of where our faith must be placed, and the joy that is possible, even in a time of quarantine.

Keep singing your faith, even during this time of uncertainty!

Deanie Moore, Director of Music

Community Outreach Continues

We recently learned, in studying St. Benedict’s Rule, that we are to look for Christ in every stranger who comes our way. Outreach in Spring Hill and the

surrounding communities is a wonderful way to follow the advice of St. Benedict and during this Covid-19 quarantine Grace Episcopal is staying active in outreach.

As we go through this difficult time, we all realize that the struggle is even harder for those who struggle in normal times. That said, we welcome everyone in the Grace family to get involved in outreach, and below we have provided some current and potential projects that we can use as we reach out to help those in need in our community. If you would like more information on any of these programs, please reach out to Marsha or Richard Hawarah.

- Make food and cash donations to The Well to feed needy people
- Run errands for the elderly and ill
- Make phone calls to stay in contact with people, especially those who are alone
- Make trips to the grocery store or pharmacy for those who are unable to shop
- Collect greeting cards and send them to persons in nursing homes and care facilities
- Support Snotty Giggles Dog Rescue and Frankie's Place, two local privately operated nonprofit animal shelters, in their work to care for homeless and ill animals.

Richard Hawara, Community Outreach

“Crisis is an Opportunity for Change”

The Covid19 crisis can be our opportunity for positive change in our families, communities, nations and world. One such possibility for our church family is to become more connected even though at this time it is not through personal presence or touch. Availability of contact information connects us to each other, increases our feeling of community, and promotes our feelings of personal safety.

As a church community, we are working on a membership directory we affectionately call a “Selfie Directory”. Grace Church needs each of you to take this very popular picture of yourself and/or your family and e-mail to proberts000@charter.net.

Suggestions that might be helpful to aid cohesion in our directory include:

- Choose “portrait” style photograph
- Face the light source
- Simple backgrounds and uncomplicated clothing patterns are recommended
- Be your relaxed self and have fun

Your participation in this directory and the information that you choose to include is your personal choice, i.e.: name, email, address, and phone number. This directory will not be available on the internet. It will be available to members in hard copy at Grace Episcopal Church. Your prompt response of your emailed “selfie” will expedite the production of our Grace Church Directory. ***Our deadline for receiving selfies is Monday, June 30.*** There will not be a charge for this booklet because you are your own best photographer.

Peggy Roberts

Clergy and Staff

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

The Mission Council

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

For online contributions to Grace Church:

<https://graceepiscopalspringhill.org/#giving>.

