
Grace Episcopal Church
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Grace Notes

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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, John Harvey, Ed Strong, and Peggy Roberts. *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.

July 22	St. Mary Magdalene
July 25	James the Apostle
Aug. 6	The Transfiguration of Christ
Aug. 15	St. Mary, Mother of our Lord
Aug. 24	St. Bartholomew the Apostle

Services and Continuing Events

- Sun. at 10 a.m. In-person service at Grace; e-mail
Susan Austin, sjanawicz@aol.com, to reserve
physical distancing seating.
- 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
Tues. & Fri. AA Meeting, 7 p.m.

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

- Sundays at 8 and 10:00 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

July 15, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Now that we are in the midst of summer in lectionary year A, our Sunday gospel lessons include the teachings Jesus gives through parables about seeds and things that grow. Maybe this would be a good time to send you an article I wrote fifteen years ago, also during year A, with these lessons on seeds, weeds, and God's love of life.

GRAMPA'S WATERMELONS

About thirty years ago, I used to visit my Grampa Savage on the farm in the summertime. He would lead me on a tour of the garden, in which I had considerable interest, since much of the food Grandma cooked for me when I visited came from there. We would walk past the okra, the squash, the peppers, the tomatoes, and the beans. "Step on down the street," he would say. In his rich Mississippi voice, it sounded more like, "Step own dahn the street."

He would show me the watermelons. I don't know how he got such a lush watermelon patch going, but he did. The watermelons grew long, dark green, very big, and almost too heavy to carry back to the house; but we managed. Except for the many seeds, when these watermelons were ripe, sweet, and cool, they were pure heaven to eat on a hot summer's day. The seeds didn't slow us down or reduce our pleasure much. We would just spit them out.

God must like making things grow. He does it all the time. He must enjoy gardens. Jesus talked a great deal about seeds, and growing things, and fruit. He told us he wants us to abide in him, that we might bear fruit. He told parables about sowers, and enemies that planted weeds among the wheat crop, and about tiny mustard seeds that grow into great shrubs. His disciples picked right up on that habit. James spoke of receiving "with meekness the implanted word," and Peter told his people that they had been "born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God." Then he added, "That word is the good news which was preached to you."

God likes to make things grow. Jesus speaks of seeds. And his disciples speak of the word of God being the greatest of seeds. To be part of God's own pleasure, we need to let ourselves become part of his garden. We need to let his word into our hearts, that our faith may be fed and fertilized, that it may flourish like a well-watered Tennessee garden in July.

I used to talk to Grampa sometimes about gardening, though I was more interested in girls, sports, and rock music. I don't know that I ever asked him about planting seeds, though. I was much more interested in enjoying the harvest.

But every year, he would plant many seeds. Some of them would sprout. Some of the sprouts would have blossoms. Some of the blossoms would become watermelons. Many, many seeds could have been declared a waste. But some bore fruit 30 fold, 60 fold, or 100 fold. The harvest was awesome and wonderful to anyone who had eyes to see, a grandma who cooked, and a mouth to eat.

We may not realize it, but we who enjoy the watermelons of our gardens are actually God's own watermelons. We who understand and believe the word of God as revealed in Christ and the Holy Scriptures have God's own seed in our hearts, and it will bear fruit, just like Grampa's watermelons.

And another thing is quite amazing. Does anyone know how many seeds are in a watermelon? I sure don't. Must be thousands. There must be even more seeds in the life of a faithful child of God.

You are God's own watermelon patch. Hear, believe, understand, and bear fruit. You are full of hidden seeds just dying to burst to life.

Faithfully,
Father Joe

Seeking Spiritual Guidance Through Bible Study

Many of us at Grace were disappointed when we learned of the stay-at-home directive issued in Tennessee due to COVID-19. It meant that we would have to cancel, for an uncertain period, the Wednesday noon Eucharist with healing that has become an important part of our mid-week worship at Grace. Fortunately, Father Joe has replaced the Wednesday service, for now, with a Tuesday morning Bible study based on our weekly Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospel readings.

The study is conducted via Zoom so that we can participate at our homes through the internet.

I believe we are all seeking spiritual guidance, and the best place to find that guidance is in the Bible. When we gather on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 we are encouraged to share what we understand the scriptures are telling us. We also get Father Joe's input on how each lesson can strengthen us daily and help us succeed in our personal spiritual journey. If your schedule allows, please consider joining us each Tuesday. It will be time well spent, and what you can add to our study will be a blessing to all who are in attendance.

By Richard Hawarah

Mid-Year Financial Update 2020

We are halfway through 2020. It seems appropriate to look at where Grace Church stands, from a financial perspective, mid-year. It has been quite an unusual year with the COVID-19 still around. We have seen a substantial rise in on-line giving and a reduction in expenses overall, not only from our reduced in-person presence but also as we made a shift to Susan Browning working from home and only on our financial issues. We have not been able to replace the office assistant and thus our expenses in that category are well below budget. Our administrative costs (office supplies and the like) have also been well below budget. On the income side, we did not have an Easter offering and did not hold the Divine Swine BBQ. Overall giving has also been somewhat impacted. Here are our mid-year brief financials:

Year to Date (June 30, 2020) Financial Summary

Income:	\$49,741
Expenses:	\$54,450
Diff:	-\$4,709

Our pledged income is down by a little over \$3,087 at mid-year. We remain aware of the adverse impact COVID-19 has had on our economy. If you can complete your pledge, it would be greatly appreciated. On-line giving and mailing checks to the church remain as giving options. Please keep Grace Church in your prayers as we keep all of you in ours.

.Ed Strong, Treasurer

The Altar & Flower Guild Story

For over 25 years I have had the honor, privilege, and blessing to be on the Altar Guild at two different churches. Each church is different, but the need is basically the same. Our job is to have the elements used in the Eucharist in place for each service. We help with baptisms, funerals, weddings, and other special services throughout the year. Even through this terrible time of the COVID-19 virus, the altar has still needed to be set up for the online services.

It sounds quite a demanding task! But I have never viewed it that way. Yes, it is a job that is always there, but it is also important as a way we serve our church community and worship God. As a task that is usually done in silence, in an empty church when no one else is around, it can easily be taken for granted; but it is fulfilling to know that our work is such an integral part of our worship at Grace.

Our wonderful altar guild ladies, Mimi DeMoss, Carolyn George, and Michele Gibson-O'Grady, are always there to get the job done, helping each other and filling in when needed. And since we do not have a separate Flower Guild, they also do the task of designing arrangements or bringing in potted plants to decorate the altar area. That makes it a double duty, but they gladly do this as well. Likewise, they faithfully take those linens used every Sunday home to clean and be made ready for use again each week. I cannot thank them enough for all they do!

If you think you might like to know more about the altar guild, or perhaps join our team, please contact me, or any member of the guild, or Father Joe. Prior experience is not necessary. We train and help anyone who is new to the Altar Guild until one feels able to work independently. You will be blessed by the task. You may contact me, Linda Colmore, at 615-403-7498 or by email, lcolmore@aol.com.

Linda Colmore, Altar Guild

“Selfie” Search

We have gathered many good-looking selfies for the Grace Episcopal Church Directory and are excited to begin assembling our booklet. Unfortunately, I am missing some important pictures of probably our most “camera-shy” members. I will

be calling you to make sure you are not overlooked, and if you choose not to be included in our church information, that is fine. During this COVID-19 time, I know we all will feel more secure and be more comforted knowing this information will allow us to interact more freely with our Grace Church family

Peggy Roberts

Technology and Grace

It has sometimes been remarked by politicians, business consultants and motivational speakers that the Chinese character for “crisis” is a combination of the characters for “danger” and “opportunity”. Although some linguists cast doubt on this interpretation, I do think this trope should resonate with us as Christians, as we seek to find hope and growth in the face of adversity.

While the on-going COVID-19 pandemic has made some of our cherished traditions impractical, we have continued with weekly services and Bible studies with the aid of technology. We hope to continue some of these new practices in the short-to-medium term even after circumstances allow some limited in-person attendance. We also welcome help from anyone with ideas on how we can continue to improve.

David Thomas has contributed greatly to our Church community by streaming our services on Facebook Live every Sunday at 10:00 a.m. since March 15, as well as several week-day services during Holy Week. David has used simple equipment – a phone and a tripod – to significant effect. We have regularly had several dozen viewers for our live video streams which are available through our Church Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GraceChurchSH>).

Facebook also archives our videos with the result that we have had many more views “after the fact”; as of late May, our video from March 22 currently has about 1,700 views. (Also, look up our services at Grace Episcopal Church, Spring Hill on Youtube.com)

Father Joe has also used Zoom for “Virtual Coffee Hours” and Tuesday Bible studies, allowing us opportunities for fellowship and group study. It has

been greatly comforting and exciting to see friend's check-in from as far away as Florida and Texas.

Finally, we have been using our Website (<https://www.graceepiscopalspringhill.org>) to post updates and as a secondary file repository for our weekly bulletins. While Facebook has been our primary avenue for "breaking news", we are looking forward to expanding our Web presence in the future.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in our online services. Feedback is always welcome and necessary for improvement.

For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to join us online, I recommend you download the Facebook app on your smart phone, tablet, or smart television; I also recommend using the Zoom app on your smart phone or tablet. Facebook and Zoom can also be used with a web browser on your desktop or laptop or computer, but you may find the apps to be easier to use. On Facebook, please follow our page (search for "GraceChurchSH spring hill" in the search bar). You may also want to join our Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/167751256593068/>). Zoom meeting invite codes change frequently, so please check your e-mail as well as Facebook for the latest scheduled meetings.

We know that there have been some issues with video streams. Unfortunately, there are several probable causes for this, and sometimes the issues are beyond our control. But, in many cases, re-loading the page or re-starting your app may resolve the issues. If you need technical assistance, please contact me by phone, 713-254-4175, or e-mail (www@graceepiscopalspringhill.org) and I will do my best to provide suggestions to improve your user experience.

We are always looking for additional help for our "liturgical team." If you are comfortable using Facebook video or would like to host a "Virtual Coffee Hour" or other event, please reach out to Fr. Joe or the Mission Council. Even if you would like to remain at home, we could still use more "digital ushers" -- folks who welcome viewers to our live streams on Facebook, post relevant content on our Facebook page and Facebook group, and report technical issues back to our videographer.

Additionally, I would like to extend a special invitation to anyone with experience with WordPress (or HTML more generally) as a Web admin. Please reach out to me or to Fr. Joe if you are interested.

NOTE: Part II, Directions to access Grace 10:00 a.m. worship via Facebook.

James Dallas

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, Congregational Life
Mark Henderson, Communications
Richard Hawarah, Community Outreach
Diann Schneider, Christian Education
Ed Strong, Treasurer
David Thomas, Assistant Treasurer
Michele Gibson O'Grady, Clerk

To give to Grace Church online:

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

