

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. Information on activities and programs at Grace will be sent to you via email and Facebook.

Feb. 17	Noon	Ash Wednesday Service
Feb. 21	10:00 a.m.	First Sunday in Lent; Bishop's Annual Visitation
Feb. 24	6:00 p.m.	Lenten Evening Prayer
March 3, 10, 17, 24,	5:30	Lenten Evening Prayer
March 25		The Annunciation
March 28		Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday
April 4		Easter Day

Services and Continuing Events

Sun. at 10 a.m.	To attend in-person, email Susan Austin, sjanawicz@aol.com to reserve physically distanced seating.
Sun. at 10 a.m.	Facebook Live Service Broadcast
Sun. at 11:15 a.m.	Coffee Hour via Zoom
Tues. at 10 a.m.	Bible Study via Zoom
Tues. & Fri. at 7 p.m.	AA Meeting

Vicar's Vagaries: Lent, 2021

Do you remember the nerdy kids in school who would ask, "Do we get extra credit for this?" Teachers suffer such questions with good humor, but this question does not normally come from a student who loves learning for its own sake. The thought of Lent approaching on the calendar reminds me of this question I have not heard in a long time. Lent? I

thought we were already in Lent, ever since mid-March of 2020, when they cancelled the NBA and classes at college, closed bars and restaurants, and sent everybody home for the pandemic. What could we possibly abstain from that would mean anything, when we have been abstaining from *singing in church* and *the communion chalice* for about 10 months? Not to mention most of our church members, who have given up actually attending church in person, with their vicar's full approval, for the sake of their own health and the health of others! How can a Lenten fast have meaning in our current circumstances?

Over 20 centuries, the Church has endured plagues, wars, persecutions, heresies, schism, prosperity, the Enlightenment, Western materialism, television, rock music, and computers. God is not likely to start letting us down now. In Lent, we devote ourselves to renewing the practices of discipleship that help us the most in our life with God.

This year, a sensible plan for Lent (Lenten rule) may be found in a return to the fundamentals of what Lent is about. These fundamentals are found in the Ash Wednesday liturgy, where we are invited to "the observance of a holy Lent" which we accomplish through "self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word." (BCP, p. 265)

The changes to our way of life during our struggle against the coronavirus have caused some of us to be exhaustingly busy, while others miss the stability which a full schedule can provide us with. What we all have in common is that our way of life is disturbed, and people we have known have gotten sick and died. We have grief unexpressed, energy not spent, fatigue without respite. Our inclination may be to seek distraction from ourselves and our feelings. But Lent bids us examine ourselves and repent, to study how we have stepped off the way of the Lord and get back on the path. How can we pray better? Are we listening to God? What can we do to be in better communication with the one who carries us through our trials with his grace? Answer these questions, and decide on one or two little things to

do, and you will have a large part of your Lenten rule.

Here are a few suggestions. Resolve to pray every morning first thing, even before looking at an electric information-giving device. Keep the radio off while in your car, at least for the first 15 minutes of your drive. Listen in silence and stillness at a set time daily for at least 5 minutes for the stirrings of God in your heart. You decide; but make prayer, facing your real self (as opposed to the self you allow others to see), and make returning to God part of your discipline, and you will have the beginnings of a rule.

How about fasting and self-denial? You may have given up so much already that such a suggestion sounds ridiculous. However, it is in the spirit of Lent to resolve to perform one act of kindness or generosity per day without any thought of how you will benefit from that act. If you feel as though you are about to scream, breathe deeply and smile, and give away an act of kindness. Phone calls to people you haven't talked to in a while, a back rub for the one person you are with so very much, making a donation of food or money to The Well, listening extra carefully to a child you have home-schooled after a hard day of work, or going to the store for an elderly person you know—all of these could be such an act of kindness not done for yourself. Whatever you do, when you give away a bit of yourself through this act, join your action with a prayer to Christ, who gave all of himself for us, and you will be practicing dying to self, and the abundant life of Christ in you will increase.

As for reading and meditating on God's holy Word, it helps to decide in advance on a plan of reading some scripture every day. You can read a very small bit, around ten verses, but let yourself read it differently from your normal way. Read it slowly. Think about each word. Then read it again. Be still and let its meaning come to you. Ask God, "What are you saying to me in these scriptures?" Then give him time as you remain still and silent. Think back on what you read later in the day. You might even write down your thoughts and feelings relating to this verse. Read scripture this way, and you will be giving God an opening to break through the weird feelings we all have during the pandemic. If you would also like to make a sacramental confession, as provided in our Book of Common

Prayer, you may do so. It is always a good idea to make a confession before Easter. Call or write me if you would like me to hear your confession. I can do it by way of video conference if you have a computer and the internet.

Father Joe

The Bishop's Visitation on Sunday, February 21

Bishop Bauerschmidt will visit Grace Church next Sunday to preach and celebrate the Eucharist. He comes every year to every congregation in the diocese, and we get to start out Lent with him among us this year. Unfortunately, we will not be able to have a reception for him after church.

Lenten Program

We will have Evening Prayer at 5:30 p.m. on the Wednesdays in Lent by way of Zoom. We will begin on February 24. I will make the link available to those who want to come. This service takes about 25 minutes. I will involve volunteer lesson readers if anyone would like to help. I will also lead you through in case you aren't familiar with the service or have forgotten parts of it.

We will continue the Zoom Bible study at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesdays. Its topic is the lessons for the following Sunday (except for this Tuesday, when we will talk about the lessons for Ash Wednesday).

Mission Council

This month, our mission council will meet on Thursday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m. by Zoom.

Wedding Announcement

I want you all to know that our new members Samantha Bennett and Scott McKnight are now married. They had a small ceremony in East Tennessee around Christmas. Congratulations, and best wishes to you both, from your Grace Church family.

Marie Aliano

Soon after her husband John died after a long bout with cancer, Marie discovered that she herself was quite ill. Her daughter Christine told me Saturday that our beloved Marie died in the hospital last Thursday, February 11 at about 4:00 a.m. Marie and

John both had been long-time members of Grace ever since Mama Flo invited them to come, and they loved their Grace Church family. A burial service for both John and Marie is being planned for family members.

New Members of the Mission Council

On January 10, at the annual meeting of Grace Episcopal Church, two new members of the Mission Council were elected. Laurie McNutt and Will Pomeroy will each serve three-year terms, replacing Jessica Farmer and Richard Hawarah. We are truly blessed that Laurie and Will have stepped up to serve.

Laurie, who lives in Columbia, will be the liaison for Congregational Life. Under the current conditions this is a challenging assignment. Normally, we would be planning a reception for a visit from the Bishop, planning fifth Sunday lunches, a pancake supper, and other fun activities. I suspect Laurie will be recruiting volunteers for new and innovative ways keep our members involved.

Will, his wife Michelle, and their son Barrett, live in Spring Hill. He will be taking on the responsibilities for Communications. One of the first priorities will be establishing a new Facebook page to replace the version that was mysteriously taken down by the Facebook police.

There is one other addition to the Mission Council. Peggy Roberts was elected Clerk and brings her talents to make certain our actions are officially recorded. If you aren't already aware, Peggy also is a key member of the Grace Notes team, handling most of the layout work. She and husband Dick reside in Spring Hill.

Please join me in welcoming these new additions and thanking them for their time and service.

John Harvey, Sr. Warden

End of Year 2020 Treasury Report

Year 2020 was challenging for Grace. The COVID pandemic started in the Winter of 2019 but started to hit home with Grace in March - just after the Nashville tornadoes. We began broadcasting the single services with a limited crew in the spring and general attendance was suspended through mid-summer.

Once opening to limited attendance, the number of people attending in person services at Grace has been smaller than the previous year. The lessened attendance was of course reflected in the plate income, being about half of the previous year. Many are struggling with the dip in the economy. Overall, Grace received \$4,577 less revenue than was anticipated in the budget. This would have been worse, but we were able to supplement revenue from undesignated funds in savings.

Grace also had less expenses for 2020, having spent \$8,000 less than was budgeted. The primary causes were less use of the building through not filling a secretary position. Susan Browning has remained as Financial Administrator, working primarily from home. The net result was that expenses were \$8,890 less than was visualized in the budget.

Considering all that has transpired in 2020, Grace was fortunate. We are blessed with a generous congregation. Many churches have not been able to maintain services. We finished the year with \$6,539 in checking and \$67,588 in savings.

Broken down, we have the following earmarked funds in savings:

Organ Fund	\$23,500
Building Fund	\$26,540
Large Pledge Escrow	\$0.00
Undesignated	\$17,549.42

Dave Thomas, Treasurer

Children's Church Delivered

It has been a long time since we have been able to have had Children's Church at Grace. I have many say how much they miss seeing the kids of Grace every Sunday. I have missed teaching Children's Church as I am sure that the other volunteers in Children's Church have also missed teaching.

As the Pandemic kept moving along and it became truly clear that it would be quite a while before we would be able to hear the voices of the kids on Sundays, Diann Schneider and I decided that it would be a good idea to send Children's Church to the kids. In the fall, I started to find materials and books that would give the kids a way to keep up with building their faith. The books included many of the Parables of Christ, as well as

other Bible stories. There were activity sheets related to the Parables and Bible stories, as well as journals and devotional books. Diann and I got together and put the “packets” together and then I delivered them to the kids. We received great responses from the kids and their parents.

We also made “packets” to give to the kids for Advent. These included Advent Calendars, activity books with Advent related puzzles and coloring pages, and Nativity stickers that they could use for themselves and share with their friends. For the younger kids, we also included a Nativity window cling scene which turned out to be a big hit, especially with Ada Rose! Now, we are working on “packets” to send out for Lent and Easter.

I have really enjoyed doing this and I really appreciate the support and help from Diann. Hopefully, we will someday soon, we will once again hear the voices of the kids again at Grace!

One more thing, if I have missed any kids of Grace and they would like to receive these “packets”, please let me know!!

Lynn Rieger

Grace Helps Members of the Community

Thanks to a grant from the Episcopal Diocese, Grace Episcopal Church will present Kroger gift cards to area families in need.

Chapman’s Retreat Elementary School, located in Williamson County, received \$250 worth of \$50 gift cards for Kroger. Spring Hill Elementary School, located in Maury County, received \$250 of \$50 gift cards for Kroger. At each school, counselors and social workers distributed the cards to families in need. Details on the final recipient are still in process.

Carol Martinez applied for the Grant and chaired the distribution committee that included Richard Hawarah, Dave Thomas, and Father Joe. Grace was awarded a \$500 grant for local distribution from the Diocese, and an additional \$100 came from generous donations from two members of the congregation.

During this current situation, many families need assistance for food and housing, and it was great to be able to help members of our community in this small way. The recipients of the donations will remain anonymous, but the committee is confident that they will go to deserving families.

The Diocese of Tennessee was awarded an emergency grant of \$15,000 by Episcopal Relief and Development to help at-risk households in Middle Tennessee pay for food and housing.

Carol Martinez

COVID-19 VACCINATION

. It is awfully hard to explain, but after receiving our second shots of Moderna last week, it feels like a weight lifted. We celebrated both injection events and were pleased not to have any side-effects either time, other than some soreness in our arms. Fully vaccinated for COVID-19, we are reminded that it is two weeks after the second shot before Moderna reaches its full affect. Also, until most people are vaccinated, we must all continue to mask, social distance, avoid crowds and strive for an open environment. Attending church in person in early March sounds incredibly good.

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
David Thomas, Treasurer
Ed Strong, Assistant Treasurer
Laurie McNutt, Congregation Life
Will Pomeroy, Communications
Mark Henderson, Community Outreach
Diann Schneider, Christian Education
Peggy Roberts, Clerk

To give to Grace Episcopal Church online:
<https://graceepiscopalspringhill.org/#giving>.

