



The Messenger

December 2018

Christmas Services

Monday, December 24th

Early Christmas Eve

7:00pm

Carols & Special Music

10:00pm

Christmas Eve

10:30pm

Tuesday, December 25th

Eucharist

10:00am

Rector's Message

Fr. Brian Prall

Advent, at least as far as newsletter submissions go, is that wonderful time of year when your pastor typically warns against the glitz and glamor of consumerism obscuring the mystery, along with some rant about how early it seems that secular Christmas has encroached into other seasons. I'd be inclined to do the same, but then how would I explain my enjoyment of Freeport's Mistletoe Walk this past Sunday, or the fact that at said event I was standing in line in my clericals with my daughter to see Santa Claus *before* Thanksgiving? Then of course there is the bashful admission that some dormant part of my childhood awe and wonder nearly compelled me to cut in front of my daughter, leap into Santa's lap, and cry out like Ralphie in *A Christmas Story*, "I want a battery-operated Milwaukee M18 Sawzall reciprocating saw!" You'll cut your fingers off kid?

Like many people, I do not appreciate being hurled into yuletide joy before I am good and ready. Thanksgiving is special to me and I like to have my turkey and eat it too. Then I like to nap.

But there is something beautiful, I think, in having slightly blurred lines between the hallmark dates of the all-encompassing Holiday Season, that time from Thanksgiving to the New Year. It just requires a different lens. A liturgical lens. Thanksgiving for example, while not part of the liturgical calendar per se, is a wonderfully appropriate lead-in to our season of Advent. It is a date set aside for intentionally giving thanks for all the blessings of this life, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. This, of course, is something we practice in the church every Sunday with the Eucharist, which comes from the Greek noun *eucharistia*, meaning "thanksgiving."

Out of thanksgiving naturally flows gratitude. "Gratitude," Br. David Vyrhof of the Society of St. John the Evangelist says, "springs from the awareness that we have been given a gift . . . This awareness can rise in us suddenly and unexpectedly, but it can

also be *cultivated*. We can *develop* our awareness, and learn to *practice* gratitude.” Vyrhof goes on to say that “Gratitude moves beyond the recognition of the gift to the recognition of the giver,” and gratitude expressed is part of the entire process, the process of building relationship.

The season of Advent is the time in our liturgical calendar when we prepare our hearts and minds to receive the greatest gift of all, Jesus, the Messiah. Born of a woman and made truly human, Jesus is God’s gift to the world, sent to rebuild our relationship with God, to reconcile us to the one who created us. Our preparation in the weeks to come for the arrival of the Christ child is about making room in our hearts with gratitude for this amazing gift.

Since gratitude, as Br. Vyrhof observed, is something that can be cultivated and practiced, I invite you to form a practice this Advent with gratitude as your foundation. In our Christian Formation classes, we will be discussing small experiments, those little practices we try to instill into our daily living to make room for God. Along with this, I invite all of you to pick up a copy of *Living Compass’* Advent devotional, which this year is focused on generosity, a discipline born out of gratitude. Just using this small resource booklet could very well be your small experiment.

While I do not wish to use this space to gripe about our cultural wars around the Holiday Season, it is true that this time of year gets hectic with travel plans, meals, and gift giving. Even the simple conversation of whether or not to get each other gifts or to get a larger gift for both to enjoy, and then trying to decipher if your partner really meant they did not want you to get them a gift or was there a subtext you may have missed, is immensely stressful. How does one even find the time to devote to fretting about when or where Christmas music was being played (Bing, all day everyday if I had my druthers)?

However, when we intentionally delve into Advent, this liturgical space carved out to just be with God, all those other concerns take their rightful place in the not-worth-getting-worked-up-about pile. I hope you have a wonderful and prayerful Advent, and I hope that you are able to cultivate some practice into your days to prepare him room with a grateful heart.

- This is Christmas: not the tinsel, not the giving and receiving, not even the carols, but the humble heart that received anew the wondrous gift, the Christ.

—Frank McKibben

- Take Christ out of Christmas, and December becomes the bleakest and most colorless month of the year.

—A. F. Wells

- I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all year.

—Charles Dickens

- The spirit of Christmas is annual; the Spirit of Christ is eternal.

—Stuart Briscoe

Grace Episcopal Church

10 S. Cherry Avenue, Freeport, IL 61032

Church office hours: 8:00 - 5:00pm

Tuesday through Friday

Phone: 815-232-4422 Fax: 815-235-4542

E-mail: gracechurch@aeroinc.net

Grace Episcopal Church WEB Site gracechurchfreeport.org

In case of an emergency please call:

Priest-in-Charge Brian Prall 815-233-1828

E-mail: fr.brianprall@gmail.com

The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey D. Lee, Bishop of Chicago

Priest-in-Charge:	Fr. Brian Prall
Ministers:	The People of Grace Church
Secretary:	Connie Olson
Wardens:	Peggy Isaac, Senior Warden Candy Colby, Junior Warden
Treasurer:	Heidi Downing
Clerk:	Mike Shore
Vestry:	Stephanie Degenhardt, Chad Enright, Laurie Gungel, John Gush, Carol Price, Marissa Routson, Nick Smith
Organists:	Steve McMillen and Laura Watson
Choir Director:	Steve McMillen
Altar Guild:	Peggy Isaac

This and That

I would like to thank all who provided food, assisted with setup or cleanup for St. Andrew's Day. Also, thanks to Steve for keeping in contact with Bill our bagpiper. I think he needs to be made an honorary member of Grace Church. The day was wonderful and so was the tea that followed. I truly appreciate all you did to assist.

Mike Shore, tea chairperson

Christmas Flower Donation It is time to place our order with the florist for the wreaths and flowers that decorate our walls and doors for the Christmas season. We depend on your donations to cover the cost of the wreaths and plants, and it is, at the same time, an opportunity for a special remembrance of your loved ones, or a celebration of God's blessing in your life. During the week following Christmas the plants are delivered to homes and nursing homes carrying thoughts and love from Grace Church. There is an envelope included in this Messenger. Please drop your envelope into our Sunday collection plate or send your donation to the church for flowers along with any names or intentions to be remembered at the Christmas Service.

Advent Quiet Dinner Wednesday, December 5, 2018 from 5:30 to 7:00pm. Please join us for food and fellowship as we enter into this holy season, preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of Jesus, our Emmanuel.

ECW First Friday Our December gathering of the Episcopal Church Women will be on Friday, December 7th at 11:30am. No need to bring a sack lunch as we will have cheesy ham chowder for our meal. We will be sharing our experiences of the Red Door Bazaar and discuss outreach giving. All women are encouraged to come join in the conversation and fellowship.

Heartfelt Thanks The list of parishioners who pitched in to make our recent Red Door Bazaar and luncheon the successful event is so long, I have to day THANK YOU to everyone at Grace Church. We are blessed with an unselfish spirit here and it was so evident during the weeks that led up to the Bazaar. Many of you made handcrafted items, baked dozens of cookies, cooked endless pots of soup, helped with the setup and cleanup (special thanks to Evelyn Appiah who was the sole dishwasher on Saturday), served our guests (special thanks to Steve McMillen for another awesome job of getting the word out on social media), and helped us reach a profit of around \$1800. Blessings abound!

United Thank Offering Ingathering Thanks to our adorable ushers, Maddie and Lucy, we presented a check for \$250 to the Diocesan UTO Coordinator who offered it, with the collections from other churches in the Diocese, during the Eucharist at the Diocesan Convention.

“The United Thank Offering has become synonymous with the Blue Box, a tangible reminder that encourages individuals to Pray daily, give thanks to God, and place a thank offering into the Blue Box.” Since 1889, funds collected have met needs in mission and ministry projects. “Practicing a discipline of thankfulness changes the lives of all participants and those with whom they share their gratitude.” For any questions regarding ECW, please contact me at cburden43@gmail.com or 815-789-3181

Connie Burden

Annual Meeting, January 27, 2019 All reports for the meeting need to be turned into the office no later than January 16th either electronically (gracechurch@aeroinc.net) or printed in a format ready to be copied for the annual report.

Notes from Grace's Greens:

Please join us during coffee hour after church on Sunday, December 2nd. We will watch an inspiring talk given by Christiana Figueres who was the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention that resulted in the Paris Agreement. The talk was given recently at Oxford University in England. It is very reassuring to hear of how much has already been achieved as a result of the agreement - although, of course, there is still plenty more to do. We will also talk about what projects and fun activities we would like to be involved in during the upcoming year. We look forward to hearing new ideas.

Grr

Did you ever consider that the word grudge starts with the letters gr? Mean animals often “grrr” and so do some mean-spirited people — at least by their nasty demeanor. In order to have the Christmas spirit, our grudges and our “grrrs” are going to have to be eliminated.

- Christmas is love tugging us back to God with the powerful clasp of a tiny hand reaching out from a bed of straw.
—Unknown

- I've learned that love is a great investment. No matter whom you give it to, it returns great dividends.
—Anonymous

Christmas Prayer



Loving Father, help us to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift, and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen!

—Robert Louis Stevenson



Grace's Greens Sunday, December 2nd during coffee hour we will watch an inspiring talk given by Christiana Figures who was the Executive Secretary of the UN Convention that resulted in the Paris Agreement.

Advent Meal Wednesday, December 5th at 5:30pm in St. Stephen's Hall. No need to bring anything. Questions call Nicole Bolotnik at 815-990-1375.

Bible Study Fridays, December 7th and 21st at 10:00am.

ECW First Friday All women of Grace Church are invited to come to the church undercroft on Friday, December 7th, for our monthly gathering. Please bring your own lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided. We meet at 11:30am and spend time getting to know each other and discussing ECW programs and events. We hope you will join us. Please contact Connie Burden with any questions. cburden43@gmail.com or 815-789-3181.

Men of Grace Breakfast Saturday, December 15th, 8:00am at 9 East. All are welcome to attend.

Hanging of the Greens Please plan to join us after church on December 23rd to decorate the church for Christmas.

December



1st	Heather Becker	14th	Nicole Bolotnik
3rd	Brian Chesterton	17th	Bernard Lischwe
4th	Duane Price		Doris Chesterton
5th	Dick Worthington	19th	Pat Lockwood
6th	Marilyn Hepner	21st	Mary Lockwood
10th	Steve Holbert		Elizabeth Maize
13th	Rita Ayre	23rd	Carol Price
14th	Elizabeth Woodward	24th	Allison Gush
		30th	Mark Helm

28th Neil & Rose Dreier

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Deadline for the January Messenger will be December 18th.

Grace Episcopal Church
10 S. Cherry Avenue
Freeport, IL. 61032
815-232-4422

Merry
Christmas



December Newsletter