



The Messenger

January 2019

Rector's Message

Happy New Year! I hope this newsletter finds you all well, and I hope that you all had a very merry Christmas.

For many people, with the New Year comes new resolutions; to be healthier, to be nicer, to be more fiscally responsible, etc. As the corporate body of Christ, churches are really not all that different. All could resolve to be physically healthier in terms of the church building, and spiritually healthier in terms of the congregation. They could resolve to be nicer, meaning taking steps to create a more welcoming atmosphere or doing more in terms of outreach to the community in which they reside. And of course, fiscal responsibility is something that is usually at the forefront as stewardship of our ministry is a continual discipline. It's all part of being Christ's heart and hands in the world.

Early in the fall, I drew a poor excuse for a target on a poster board and asked you to write hopes or goals for Grace on sticky notes and post them on the target. I was able to group them into four main themes and now have them posted on my office wall between the clock and the light switch so that they are the first thing I see when I come in, and the last thing I see on my way out each day. The four groups were Christian Formation, Outreach, Revenue, and the Kitchen, to which I will add the Church Building as a whole. I would like to speak to each of these just a bit.

Christian Formation is up and running in various incarnations. Not limited to the class sessions after the service on Sundays, we now offer Bible studies on the first and third Fridays of each month. We have also added supplemental worship experiences with the Wednesday evening Enriching Our Worship service and the Evensong and Taizé services. In the coming year, I hope to improve upon the after-service class sessions, particularly with my own preparation. As always, I welcome any suggested topics of interest and curiosity you may have. I would also like to continue with more special liturgical offerings. As Episcopalians, there are many beautiful ways in which we gather together in prayer and worship, and I would love to try them all.

Little by little I am gaining increased involvement with other area clergy and groups like FACC. If there is one thing that my Leadership Institute course at Highland has taught me, there is no shortage of need in Freeport and there are a number of non-profit groups like RAMP, Voices, or Contact that could really benefit from our support. Outreach does not require us to reinvent the wheel, unless of course there is a ministry we feel passionate about that no one has tried before. Through continued networking and increased visibility, there is no reason Grace Church cannot “get in the game” in a big way in serving our community.

Revenue presents some interesting, though not insurmountable challenges. It is also not unrelated to the building as a whole. Some creativity will be required in both of these areas moving forward. Once the kitchen project is completed, we will be able to host food related fundraisers. We also have a tremendous amount of unused space. I have asked the vestry, and now I extend the invitation to everyone, to begin thinking about how we can utilize our space better. As someone new to the building with an outsider’s perspective, I see many rooms closed off as a memorial to the past that have also been recommissioned as storage with no particular order.

Moving forward, I would like us to get creative with what to do with our abundance of space, and I cannot do that alone. Originally designed as a youth center, we have to confront the reality that we do not have youth in the same way as before. Don't worry. It's not significant to Grace or even the Episcopal Church. But can we re-envision this space? Might there be other ways to still devote it to youth-oriented programs in the community, like art, music, or dance classes? I understand a daycare had been in the nursery space at one point, but that ended up not being a long-term scenario. That's fine. What's next?

While we brainstorm and keep an ear open to the community's needs, we cannot offer a space that is not ready. Much of the space, particularly on the third floor, needs some TLC before we can consider trying to utilize it. Nothing major or costly. Just some paint, time, and a little rearranging. Maybe we can invite some local artists, or those kids who did the murals downtown to add a little color to the mix. I don't know, but we have some good energy going. The Holy Spirit is definitely at work at Grace. In the coming year, let us engage in prayerful discernment and dare to dream a little.

Fr. Brian Prall

Bits and Pieces

ECW - Episcopal Church Women First Friday gatherings will be taking a winter hiatus. We start up again in April. The Bible Study, led by Fr. Brian will continue on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month at 10:00am. All are welcome! Save the date: Rummage Sale, May 3rd and 4th. Wishing you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year! Connie Burden

Telephone Directory for 2019 We will be publishing a new directory for 2019. Please let the office know of any changes (phone number, address, family changes, etc) by January 31, 2019.

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2019 Sign up sheet is now posted in the narthex. The cost of flowers is \$29.00. Families are welcome to share a Sunday. Sometime during the month you are signed up for weekly flowers turn in a check for \$29.00 (made out to Grace Episcopal Church). You can put this in the offering plate, turn in to the office or mail to the church. Just indicate on the check that it is for altar flowers.

From the Treasurer ~

Since our January Messenger goes to press prior to the end of the year, I will include our December financial information in the report for the annual meeting.

As we close out the year, please take a look at your 2018 pledge. If you have a balance due we will happily accept payments in 2018. Just make a notation on the memo line of your check that it is for your 2018 pledge.

We have a proposed budget for 2019, which will come before you at the annual meeting on January 27, 2019. If you would like to see this budget prior to the meeting please email grace-church@aeroinc.net and Connie will send you an electronic copy or hard copy – whichever you prefer. You may also stop by the office during office hours and ask Connie for a copy.

Warden's Report

From the Sr. Warden

Almost the year's end....and looking back it was a year full of good-byes and hellos and all that went in between. By the time you read this a new baby boy named Charlie will have been born to Brian and Ellen as we wait for another baby boy named Jesus to be born into the World. Wow!! What an amazing world we live in.

This past year was full and exciting for me. It was a privilege to welcome Fr. Brian and his family to Freeport and help get them settled in their new home, to see Grace continue to thrive and grow and live out God's presence in this place. I was honored to serve as Sr. Warden during the past year...I thank each of you for your trust and support.

Thank you to Stephanie Degenhardt who finishes her term this month. Candy Colby will serve as Sr. Warden for the year 2019 and two new vestry members will be elected at the annual meeting in January.

As Tiny Tim once said "God bless us every one" and a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to each of you.

Sincerely,
Peggy Isaac

Notes from Grace's Greens (Allison Gush)

When we met in December we spoke of activities for 2019. These included movies with environmental themes, food tastings of unusual and untried items, Earth Day activities, solar energy presentation, outdoor adventures (canoeing the Rock River, visiting Nachusa Grasslands to see prairie and bison restoration, trash pickup at Oakdale Nature Preserve). Further suggestions are very welcome.

We are hoping to find some suitable documentaries to revive the movie and popcorn evening while the weather is not so great, and then in the spring to get out and enjoy the outdoors. In the meantime....Save the Date! Rock River Canoe trip on Saturday, September 7th, 2019.

April has many important dates, apart from Easter - Earth Day, Arbor Day, Faith Climate Action Week - more on this later



Bible Study Fridays, January 4th and 18th at 10:00am

Building & Grounds Meeting Tuesday, January 8th at 1:15pm in St. Stephen's Hall.

Men of Grace breakfast Saturday, January 19th at 8:00am.

Annual Meeting, January 27th, 2019 All reports for the meeting need to be turned into the office no later than January 15th either electronically (gracechurch@aeroinc.net) or printed in a format ready to be copied for the annual report.



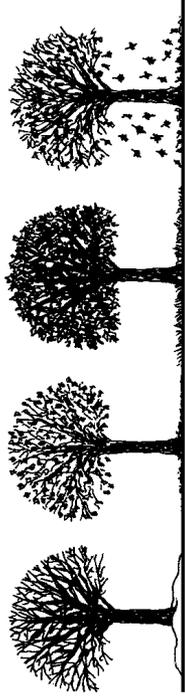
4th	Eric Appiah	28th	Chad Enright
6th	Larry Miller		Claudia Smith
14th	Judy Connors		Nelda Worthington
17th	Drew Rogers		Stephen Lafferty
27th	Scott Larson	29th	Chuck Breo

14th Gary & Heidi Downing
18th John & Dixie Holbert-Bottoms

If your birthday and/or anniversary does not appear on our monthly list or if there is an error please inform the church office via e-mail (gracechurch@aeroinc.net) or call 815-232-4422.

Deadline for the February Messenger will be January 18th.

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As We Start the New Year

January Newsletter