

# The Messenger

November 2020

## Rector's Message

On Friday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, regular readers of Episcopal News Service (ENS) went home depressed, except for me. They read an article analyzing the 2019 parochial report numbers (the data tracking church attendance, among other vitality indicators) that spelled certain doom for the Episcopal Church. I did not.

I chose not to read the article when it came out because this same grim outlook is reported every year. In fact, I wouldn't be the least bit surprised if ENS just edited the date, updated a few statistics, and published the same article. The year 2020 has already dimmed my otherwise sunny disposition, so I thought, why pile on one more thing that I have no control over? Why bring down

Yesterday, I finally decided to give the article a read, and sure enough, it felt like "déjà vu all over again." In the article, the Rev. Dwight Zscheile, an expert in denominational decline and renewal, is quoted as saying, "The overall picture is dire – not one of decline as much as demise within the next generation unless trends change significantly. At this rate, there will be no one in worship by around 2050 in the entire denomination." That's six years before my mandatory retirement of 72. Perhaps I should start acquiring other marketable skills.

It's probably pretty apparent that I do not have a lot of patience for such articles. Sounding an alarm that people have been ringing and hearing for decades while offering no solutions doesn't help anyone. Utilizing Zschelile's expertise in denominational

decline without providing so much as a thought from his supposed expertise in renewal is not terribly helpful either. How might “trends change significantly”? For years we have heard decline is due to any one of the following: moral degradation in these darn youngsters, club sports on Sundays, a boring and out-of-touch liturgy, music you can’t dance or sway to, an elitist and unwelcoming attitude, an unwillingness to address issues people really care about, and wafers with gluten.

In reality, the likely culprit for decline in the Episcopal Church is an amalgamation of all of the above and then some. Sure, the liturgy is probably going to seem boring if you haven’t been properly instructed in its shape and purpose. Lord knows I wasn’t until I got to seminary, and I’m a lifelong Episcopalian! That is on the clergy. It’s hard to sustain youth programs and outreach ministries if people don’t value them enough to commit to them. That is on the laity. The Church cannot achieve relevance in a community if it is unwilling to adapt its ministries to meet the needs of the people where they are. That is on the Church. And people will not feel encouraged to have an encounter with the risen Christ if the disciples of Jesus cannot articulate how a life in Christ has moved and formed them for the better. That is on all of us.

The ‘dire’ future of the Church may very well be a concern in the grand scheme, but here at Grace we really haven’t got time to focus on it. There is too much to do and be thankful for in the present. We are just coming off of a pretty successful stewardship campaign, and the Vestry will approve a balanced budget at their November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. We have been persistent in maintaining a safe and viable in-person worship experience, as well as a virtual presence for our dear Grace family who cannot be in attendance with us. We are inching our way back into outreach ministries, as we are once again providing a monthly meal for FACC’s shelter clients. The Vestry also recently approved Grace’s participation in the financial sponsorship of one meal a

month for Hungry Huskies, a weekly meal program that is open to any students at Northern Illinois University and is provided by the joint Lutheran/Episcopal Campus Ministries, of which I am a board member. And I have a few other irons in the fire, which I am excited to tell you about as they begin to take shape.

So, if the ENS article was supposed to compel us to pick up our hand bells and start crying out, "The end is near!" I guess we will just have to sit that one out. We've got church to do and a community to serve. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Peace,  
Fr. Brian

P.S. To read the ENS article, go to [www.episcopalnewsservice.org](http://www.episcopalnewsservice.org)

## *Heidi Downing*

On October 11, we lost a dear friend and sister in Christ, Heidi Downing. Her joy and her laughter will be truly missed. Burial is likely to be a private family service due to the latest round of COVID restrictions. An outdoor remembrance for the wider community is being planned for the spring.

As you probably know, Heidi served as Grace Church's treasurer at the time of her passing. The Vestry is responsible for electing someone to hold that office. The Vestry has elected Duane Price to be our interim treasurer until the Annual Meeting in January with plans to assess and discern a more permanent solution at that time.

## ***Grace Church News***

***UTO Ingathering - Sunday, November 1st.*** Grace Church will be collecting your United Thank Offerings. Our costumed “ushers” will not be greeting us as we exit the sanctuary this year due to the Covid-19 safety precautions. But, we can still bring our Little Blue Box or write a check (payable to ECW) to support mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion. Every penny taken in this year will be given away next year for worthwhile projects. If you are unable to attend in person, you may also mail your offering to Grace. **DUE TO THE NEW COVID RESTRICTIONS YOUR DONATIONS CAN BE TURNED IN TO THE CHURCH OFFICE.**

As our UTO Chairwoman of Chicago, Linda Toberman, states:

Happy Moments - Praise God

Difficult Moments - Seek God

Quiet Moment - Trust God

Every Moment - Thank God

Did you know that the United Thank Offering was first collected 137 years ago (!) and had given \$137,000,000 (!) in grants? Remarkable! You can also follow the UTO on Facebook!

THANK YOU for you generosity!

Connie B. [cburden43@gmail.com](mailto:cburden43@gmail.com) 815-789-3181

***Building & Grounds Meeting*** Wednesday, November 11th at 1:00pm in St. Stephen’s Hall.

***Vestry Meeting*** Sunday, November 15th

***Diocesan Convention*** Friday, November 20th and Saturday, November 21st via ZOOM. Delegates: Fr. Prall, Connie Burden, Katie and Chad Enright.

**Opportunities to Serve Grace Church** Buildings and Grounds, the committee responsible for taking care of the church property, fixing what we have the talent to repair on our own or hiring professionals who can, is looking for some new members who can commit to one meeting a month. There is no requirement to be handy with tools or possess a vast knowledge of construction, though that would certainly be welcome. Meetings have been on weekday afternoons, but the present committee members are obliged to move them to a day and time that is suitable for all.

Please reach out to Fr. Brian if you have interest serving on Buildings and Grounds. Thanks

Candidate Conversations for the 13<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Chicago

\*Please note: Though our deanery is scheduled to host the Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> session, ALL Candidate Conversations are OPEN TO ANYONE who would like to attend.

**Thursday, November 5 at 6 p.m.**, hosted by the Joliet and Peoria Deaneries

**Friday, November 6 at 10 a.m.**, hosted by the Elgin and Rockford Deaneries

**Saturday, November 7 at 12 p.m.**, hosted by the Hispanic Affairs Committee

**Thursday, November 12 at 6 p.m.**, hosted by the Evanston and Waukegan Deaneries

**Friday, November 13 at 10 a.m.**, hosted by the Chicago-North and Chicago-South Deaneries

**Saturday, November 14 at 12 p.m.**, hosted by the Aurora and Oak Park Deaneries

\*Candidate Conversations will run between 1.5 and 2 hours long. Instructions for attending will be released prior to the first scheduled conversation. Stay tuned.

## Music Notes from Steve

Everyone who knows me well, knows that one of my biggest areas of focus is the passage of time. Ever since childhood, I've been a self-proclaimed "calendar junkie." No, I can't calculate the day of the week mathematically for any given date, but I know how the calendar works, how the years run, and the dates of a vast matrix of events related to my own life. Thus, it's naturally a pleasure and a useful facility that my work in church music is interwoven with an understanding of the seasons and feasts of the Christian year.

Neatly synchronized as well are the changes to and from daylight time, each commencing overnight into a Sunday, insisting that those of us involved in churches must be the first people to adhere to the new clock setting. The fall change backward brings quite a jolt to an already darkening evening. In this bizarre year of so many adjustments, how can we look forward, knowing there will be changes in our treasured routines as the sequence of Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas faces us?

In the Episcopal Church, we often speak of Celtic influences on spirituality. I mention this because when changes in the present day seem abrupt, I sometimes like to ponder how it might have been for our forebears in the faith, who persevered in the absence of most of the conveniences and distractions we rely on. Were they always early to bed and early to rise? Were they receivers of the forces of nature rather than agents in favor of their own spiritual formation?

What we find is that Advent in the Celtic tradition began on November 15, forming a "lesser Lent" of 40 days in advance of Christmas. You'll recall from our celebrations in recent years that Candlemas on February 2 (also called the Presentation of the Lord or Purification of Mary) occurs another 40 days after Christmas, a seasonal bookend that closes a long arc. Clever

indeed were the people of long ago who devised these commemorations to draw them through the months of darkness, always focused on light.

Why this discussion of holidays and seasons? It is my hope that all of us find ways to segment and set aside time on a calendar that is separate from phases of Covid measures, early and absentee voting, weeks in and out of school, and months of uncertainty. The Christian calendar of the church year is a gift to us in all its variations. Without it we would still know the truths of our faith, but with it we have a cycle of vivid reminders that call us repeatedly to the “now” of our need and the nearness of God’s love.

I pray that you’ll find ways to make the months ahead meaningful. As ever, let us know if we can help.

Steve McMillen

### *November Birthdays/Anniversaries*

3rd	Katie Enright	10th	Ingrid Standish
	Sandra Terpening	11th	Diane Conroy
4th	Dorothy Nord	21st	Gary Downing
	Kate Worthington		Brian Dreier
6th	Richard Hepner	24th	Wendi Chesterton
7th	Jacquelyn Sigafus	28th	Keagan Miller
9th	Jack Colby		

23rd     Albert & Evelyn Appiah

**Deadline** for the December Messenger will be November 19th.

**2020 OPERATING BUDGET**  
**End of 3rd Quarter**

**Giving Income:**

<u>Jan – Sept.20</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
166,871	136,449

**Vanguard Endowment Income:**

<u>Jan –Sept. 20</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
0	12,000

**Total Income**

<u>Jan – Sept.20</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
166,871	148,449

**Total Building and Grounds Expense:**

<u>Jan – Sept.20</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
23,717	29,328

**Total All Expenses Including Rector:**

<u>Jan – Sept.20</u>	<u>YTD Budget</u>
129,770	145,282

**Current Assets:**

<u>Checking</u>	<u>Columbarium</u>	<u>Memorials</u>	<u>Endowment</u>	<u>Reserve Fund</u>
36,298	9,467	9,820	518,857	72,294

***Finance Committee Report***

WOW! What a fantastic response! Thank you! Thank you!  
50 of you have returned your pledge card. And more good news...  
we continue to happily accept pledges.

The 2021 budget will be complete and presented to the vestry for approval at their November 15th vestry meeting.

**The Worship Committee** thought you might enjoy making some of the goodies usually served at our Annual St. Andrew's Tea.

## **Dried Cranberry Scones**

### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
  - 1/4 cup sugar
  - 2-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 6 tablespoons cold butter
  - 3/4 cup buttermilk
  - 1 large egg, room temperature
  - 3/4 cup white baking chips
  - 3/4 cup dried cranberries
  - 1 tablespoon turbinado (washed raw) sugar
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### **Directions**

- Preheat oven to 400°. In a large bowl, whisk flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. In another bowl, whisk buttermilk and egg; stir into crumb mixture just until moistened. Stir in baking chips and cranberries.

Drop dough by 1/4 cupful's 2 in. apart onto parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with turbinado sugar. Bake until golden brown,  
12-15 minutes.

## **Shortbread cookies**

### **Ingredients**

- ¾ cup butter, softened
- 5 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups Gold Medal™ all-purpose flour

### **Steps**

- 1 Heat oven to 350°F. In large bowl, stir butter and 4 tablespoons of the sugar until well mixed. Stir in flour. (If dough is crumbly, mix in 1 to 2 tablespoons more softened butter.)
- 2 Roll dough on lightly floured surface until 1/2 inch thick; sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar. Cut into small shapes with knife or use cookie cutters. On ungreased cookie sheets, place shapes 1/2 inch apart.
- 3 Bake about 20 minutes or until set. Immediately remove from cookie sheets to cooling racks.

## **Lemon Curds**

- 3 large eggs
- ¾ cup granulated white sugar
- 1/3 fresh lemon juice (2-3 lemons) do not use bottled juice
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon finely shredded lemon zest

NOTE: room temperature lemons provide more juice. After squeezing, strain the juice to remove any pulp. Zest is the yellow, sweet-flavored outer rind of the lemon. A zester or fine grater can be used to remove the rind. Cold lemons are much easier to grate. Grate lemons just before using as the zest will lose moisture if it sits too long.

Lemon Curd: In a stainless steel bowl placed over a saucepan of simmering water, whisk together the eggs, sugar, and lemon juice until blended. Cook, stirring constantly (to prevent it from curdling), until the mixture becomes thick (like sour cream or a hollandaise sauce) (160 degrees F or 71 degrees C). This will take approximately 10 minutes. Cut the butter into small pieces

and whisk into the mixture until the butter has melted. Add the lemon zest and let cool. The lemon curd will continue to thicken as it cools. Cover immediately (so a skin doesn't form) and refrigerate for up to a week.

Makes 1 1/2 cups

### **Cream Cheese Pie Dough**

For a novice baker, this is the most forgiving dough to work with. The cream cheese allows this pastry some elasticity but still produces tender and flaky results.

Ingredients

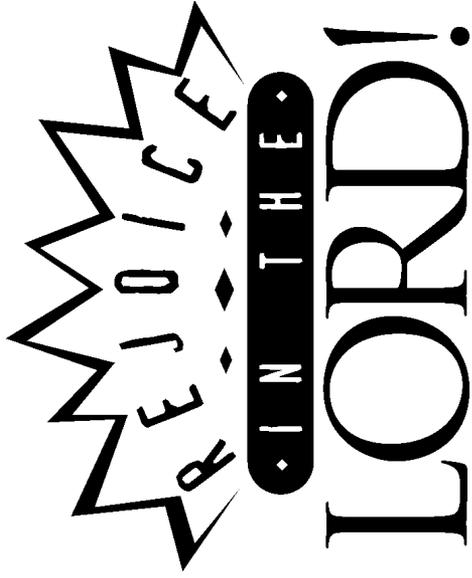
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
- 4 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour plus 2 tablespoons, plus more for rolling out the dough
- 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt

Directions

1. Process the butter, cream cheese, and cream in a food processor, electric mixer, or by hand to thoroughly combine.
2. Add the flour and salt. Process just until combined and the dough holds together in a ball. Turn the dough out onto a well-floured surface. Divide into 2 pieces. Flatten into disks and wrap each in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before rolling out. If the dough is chilled overnight, take it out 15 minutes before rolling out.

Rub flour all over a rolling pin. Working with one dough disk at a time, place the disk on a clean, well-floured surface. Applying some pressure with the rolling pin, roll gently from the center of the dough to the top and bottom edges. Rotate the disk and roll to the top and bottom edges again. Reflour the work surface and rolling pin, turn the dough over, and continue to roll the dough from the center out to the edges. Turn over and roll again, rotating the disk to ensure even rolling until the dough is about 12 inches in diameter, thin but not transparent.

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November Newsletter