



The Messenger

December 2020

Rector's Message

It has been a recurring question as of late, especially since we have returned to virtual worship for the foreseeable future: What is going to happen at Christmas? Well . . . there is only one thing of which I am absolutely certain – Christ was born on Christmas Day. The Incarnation happens. On that, you can rely.

How we get to celebrate that reality this year is an entirely different question. The Worship Committee and I have been working on contingencies for both scenarios, virtual and in-person worship, so that we are prepared to adjust at a moment's notice. The overall mission remains the same regardless of the circumstances, and that is to worship the living God in whatever capacity we are able. And for me, as your priest, the mission is to facilitate as spiritually edifying an atmosphere as possible.

Grace Church is not without precedent in unique Christmas Eve experiences. I recall hearing of a Christmas not terribly long ago when the interim priest was snowed in, and our own Chuck Terpening rose to the occasion, leading a memorable worship. My first Christmas as your priest, we got within a week of the service before we knew whether or not I would be celebrating with you or be in the hospital welcoming Charlie into the world. As things turned out, a four-day-old Charlie got to be at my first ever Christmas Eve service.

The crucial element in the coming Advent season for preparing our hearts and minds to receive the Christ Child upon Christmas will be communication. Good communication is going to be paramount to fostering both our spiritual and physical participation in the holy mystery at this time of year.

Much of my communication to you is via email. It is the most efficient means by which to reach the largest number of you in the shortest amount of time to dispense information in real time. If you use email and wish to receive emails from me, please make sure I have your address. How will you know? At the very least, you should be receiving two weekly emails: one before our Sunday Facebook Live service with materials for you to participate, and a second after the service with the link to the video for those who do not use Facebook. If you have not been receiving anything from me, check your spam folders first and then get in touch with me. In fact, I recommend checking them often, as my own spam filters have been rather stringent lately. I have been finding important diocesan emails and other communications that I used to receive without issue in my spam folder.

Throughout the season of Advent, we will be trying a variety of things to help keep us centered and engaged. We have begun dropping off copies of the *Living Compass* Advent devotional. If you'd like one, hardcopies are available for curbside pickup or delivery. Please contact the office to make a request. PDF copies can be downloaded for free at livingcompass.org/Advent. There is a plan in the works for holding a weekly Zoom discussion group, likely centered on the *Living Compass* devotional. You are welcome to call me for a one-on-one discussion if you'd prefer. I would love to know how your interaction with the book is going. There will be musical offerings on our Facebook page as well as some Evening Prayer and Compline services. I will send out links for those who do not use Facebook. I am also still providing paper copies of readings and sermon transcripts to those who do not use email or other virtual

platforms, and I would be happy to add you to my Sunday delivery route. Again, simply call the church office to make your request.

Much like last spring, I encourage you all to create a special place in your home for prayer and reflection. And like last spring, I invite you to send me a picture of that space to share on our Facebook page and via email. In fact, I would like to expand on that invitation: send pictures of your family engaged in a meaningful holiday tradition, or pictures of a favorite ornament/decoration and the story behind it, or a picture of your favorite nativity, if you have one in your home. I believe this will be a terrific way to share in some semblance of fellowship during this time.

It is difficult for us to be apart at a time when our natural instinct as Christians is to be with one another socially, prayerfully, and musically. Let us bolster our spirits by staying in good communication with one another in these Advent and Christmas seasons. I will keep you all posted on the activities to come, virtual or otherwise, and I will especially let you know what Christmas Eve plans will be as we get closer. But remember this, regardless of where we find ourselves in the weeks ahead, a Savior is coming, who is Christ the Lord. Let every heart prepare him room.

I wish you all a very blessed and prayerful Advent.

Fr. Brian

Notes from Grace's Greens

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." ___Anne Frank

While we've been distracted throughout the year by the pandemic and the elections, unfortunately climate change continues unabated. The last 4 years have been the hottest since temperatures have been recorded in the 1800s. The implications are now evident to all of us...monster fires in the west, stronger and wetter hurricanes, unsustainably hot temperatures in some of our Southwest cities and increasingly severe cycles of drought and flooding impacting the Midwest.

While we will no doubt see important changes in federal policy with the new administration, we have the opportunity here in Illinois to pass groundbreaking legislation to deal with climate change with the Clean Energy Jobs Act. This bill would put Illinois on track to 100% renewable energy by 2050, create thousands of good-paying jobs, help disadvantaged communities and ensure cleaner air quality. For additional details on CEJA, go to the Clean Jobs Coalition website.

It's important to continue to contact the governor and our state representatives and legislative leaders and demand that CEJA be passed. Legislative leaders are Majority Leader Greg Harris (773-348-3434 and 217-782-3835) and Sen President Don Harman (708-848-2002 and 217-782-8176). The Governor's phone numbers are 217-782-6830 or 217-782-6831 or 312-814-2121 or 312-814-2122. CEJA is House Bill 3624/Senate Bill 2132. It's important that these leaders hear from people all over the state, so please take 5 minutes and make a call.

“And as the leaves go down and the trees stand bare, quietly and calmly awaiting the onset of winter, let us cultivate the same calm, the same quiet resolve to persevere through the dark season until we come out on the other side to find we have created a civilization that is environmentally sustainable, socially just and practices peace in the community of all creatures.” From The Creation Care Newsletter – November 2020

Candy Colby

This and That

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2021 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.

Annual Meeting, January 24th, 2021 All reports for the meeting need to be turned into the office no later than January 13th either electronically (gracechurch@aeroinc.net) or printed in a format ready to be copied for the annual report.

Music Notes from Steve

Way back in the spring (those ages ago) when I was sheltering in place and sending out my first video recordings, I had a quaint idea. When in the distant future Christmas came along (I thought) and everything was back to normal (I thought) wouldn't it be lovely for us all to sing "Silent Night" with the autoharp this Christmas Eve? How very nice it would be to re-create the simple origins of that carol, famously improvised using a guitar when the organ failed to operate on Christmas Eve of 1818 in Austria. Surely the musician Franz Gruber and his priest Joseph Mohr, the sudden lyricist, would smile on such a heartwarming scene 202 years later in our Grace Church.

The twenty decades since 1818 may not have passed quickly, but most of this year would appear to have fast-forwarded now that we're poised at the brink of December. And while with Advent anticipation we await the holy night still some weeks away (perhaps with its gentle zither accompaniment), I want to tell you about a special program Laura Watson and I are planning.

Many of you ask me how I choose hymns and other music, and in my newsletter articles and bulletin inserts, I have tried to shed some light on specific meanings hinted in the lectionary. One motif that has captivated me over many years, although so far without outward development, is that of the rose. Poetically we hear of Mary, the "rose of such virtue" that bore our Savior. Another carol awakens us to behold "a rose in winter," referring to Jesus himself, born into the mortal world "when half-spent was the night." The vine itself is portrayed in yet more verses, woven into a grisly crown of thorns. This one plant, iconic already in the ancient world, communicates still today in its many metaphors.

Sometime in mid-December, around the third Sunday in Advent (Rose Sunday, when we light the pink candle) we plan to post online our carol service pondering the rose in its many roles. Through regular and special services, the Living Compass booklets, and other devotional moments, we hope this Advent will become uplifting and illuminating and “let every heart prepare him room.”

As ever, if there is any way we can help you to seek peace and hope, especially through music, please let us know.

—Steve McMillen

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

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

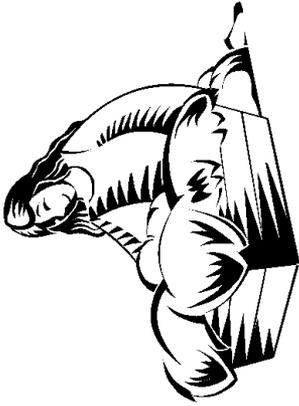
28th Neil & Rose Dreier

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Deadline for the January Newsletter is January 21st.

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**Merry
Christmas**



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