



The Messenger

February 2021

Rector's Report

As I write this, the past ten days have seen a whirlwind of changes to our COVID mitigation status here in Illinois's Region 1. We moved to Tier 2 mitigation on a Friday and over the weekend found ourselves sitting at Tier 1, able to hold in-person worship with 25% capacity. No sooner did we hold our first in-person service since late October than our status changed yet again, this time graduating to Phase 4. Phase 4? I was so unsure of when we would make it here that I had to dig out my Diocesan Guidelines to remember what that even meant!

What it means is that we can return to 50 persons or less with mask and social distancing guidelines still in effect. However, we determined last summer that in order to maintain social distancing in our worship space, we could probably only really accommodate between 30 to 40 people at one time. So, we will continue to offer services at 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings with livestreaming of the 10:00 on Facebook Live. I will not institute a service sign-up system unless it becomes necessary. We were fortunate in the previous incarnation of this phase to have people naturally gravitate towards one or the other service in a fairly even and steady pattern.

Phase 4 also means that we can dare to do a little more planning for Lent, which is just around the corner. Ash Wednesday is on February 17th this year, and, barring any setbacks in our region's progress, we will hold our traditional two services, one at 12:15 p.m. and the other at 7:00 p.m. The 7:00 will be livestreamed on our Facebook page.

While I am still working out the logistics of the imposition of ashes, I commend to you an article written by J. Neil Alexander, the liturgist and theology professor at Sewanee, called “A Note on Ash Wednesday and the Imposition of Ashes in a Time of Pandemic.” You should be able to locate it simply by entering the title into your web browser. It is a short and accessible article that shares some interesting historical tidbits about the use of ashes in our liturgy as Alexander advocates for a return to an antiquated practice of sprinkling ashes over the heads of the faithful. I am not sure this would be a wildly popular approach, and therefore unlikely that we will use it, but the article was interesting nonetheless.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to hold our traditional Lenten soup suppers. I think we only managed to sneak in two last year before the pandemic shut everything down. There are, however, other opportunities for formation and fellowship in the works. As we did during Advent, I would like to do a weekly Zoom discussion group during Lent. The subject hasn’t been determined yet, other than something centered around Lent of course. I am debating between using the *Living Compass* Lenten devotional or a book called *Holy Solitude* by the Rev. Heidi Haverkamp, a former priest of our diocese who has written on hermits and monastics. Even if we do not end up using her book, I certainly recommend it. As the pandemic has forced us into varying degrees of isolation, the book offers ways of transforming some of that alone time into holy time. Another activity in the works is a limited fellowship opportunity.

An idea pitched by our own John Gush, it would be small gatherings of two or three households and myself, either virtually on Zoom or in-person (socially distant with masks), depending on everyone’s comfort level, and we would do some check-in and otherwise engage in casual conversation. Groups would be chosen at random in order to provide an opportunity to get to know fellow parishioners with whom we are less familiar. If this is something you think you would like to

participate in, please call me or email me (fr.brianprall@gmail.com), and let me know also what you'd be comfortable with: Zoom vs. in-person.

The last item I want to discuss is on communication. Again, this is vital to our staying connected as the Body of Christ. Please, please look through the directory and make sure your contact information is up to date and sufficient. We are preparing to publish our 2021 edition soon, so if you need to change an address, add a cell number, or an email address, please do so by calling the church at 815-232-4422 or emailing me (see above address). Also, email is the fastest and most efficient way for me to accomplish mass communication. If you are not receiving my emails, I either do not have your address or it is getting lost in a spam folder in you in box. Again, call the church or email me, and that way I will for sure have your email to include in my contact list. If you do not use email and are not ready to come back to church yet, please know that I am happy to deliver the readings and sermons to your doorstep, and while I know I have to get better about picking up the phone and calling, I want you to know you are more than welcome to call me anytime.

That is about all there is to know at this time. Our March assignment for FACC's pantry is canned corn, so I will happily accept cans anytime now. I wish you all a very blessed February and a prayerful Lent. Stay safe and stay healthy, and God shall see us through.

Peace,
Fr. Brian

Bits and Pieces

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. When you sign up for flowers you are responsible for paying for them. During the month you are signed up for weekly altar 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.

Telephone Directory for 2021 We will be publishing a new directory for 2021. Please let the office know of any changes (phone number, address, family changes, etc.) by February 15th.

ECW - Episcopal Church Women 2020 Report

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10 NIV

The year 2020 is one which will be remembered as a year we all were forced to "be still". In the past, the women of Grace Church have a brief winter break from our monthly ECW meetings. This year, that break was extended throughout the entire year. Everything was shut down. We were restricted from gathering due to the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic, which continues to rage as this report is being written in January 2021. My hope is that the virus will be controlled soon and we will again be able to join together in worship and outreach, to do the work we are called to do.

Until then, may we "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, and continue steadfast in prayer." (Romans 12:12)

Connie Burden

Worship Committee 2020 Report

Church services in 2020 were unlike anything we have had to endure for many years. A big thank you goes to Fr. Brian and his family, Steve McMillen and Laura Watson for all they did to help us pivot our worship experience when everything shut down. Fr. Brian and his family opened up their home for worship all through Lent and Holy Week into Easter. Steve and Laura helped provide music during this period to raise our spirits in song. The committee came together when things allowed us to come back to worship in person on limited basis. We worked on how we could hold worship and still be socially distant and within the guidelines outlined by the Diocese. We then came back together to when we went back into no in-person worship and look at how Advent and Christmas could be done and still bring the elements of worship to the Grace Church congregation. We do not know what the winter will bring and hopefully with the vaccines coming out, we will be able to gather once again as a congregation as a whole. What wonderful celebration that will be when we can praise God as one body in Christ.

Mike Shore, Chair

Year-End statements were mailed to you in January. Please take a look at your 2020 statement. If you have a balance due we will happily accept payments in 2021. Just make a notation on the memo line of your check that it is for your 2020 pledge. If you have any questions please contact the church office either by e-mail gracechurch@aeroinc.net or phone 815-232-4422.

Music Notes:

In the November 2020 Messenger I described one of my favorite seasonal sequences. We were then at the outset of Advent, which I mentioned was celebrated by Celtic Christians for 40 days before Christmas. The observance of Candlemas (also called the Presentation of the Lord or Purification of Mary) was to follow another 40 days after Christmas, and that is where we find ourselves now, approaching the immovable feast day of February 2.

My focus on this series of Christian holy days arises from my particular interest in the theme of light. In Advent we anticipate the coming of the Light of the World. Moving toward Epiphany we are yet led by light. The Presentation of the Lord has been appropriated as a focal point to bless candles (hence the name Candlemas) so that light may endure all year long, and its placement in mid-winter underscores our hope in the growing length of days.

The coming of Ash Wednesday on February 17 seems sudden, since we were briefly into last year's Lenten season when we began the COVID-19 era of alternating quarantine and togetherness. As we go forward, I'm inspired to take as my guide the light and hope we have sought all along, and to notice that we have come this far together as the people of Grace.

Perhaps the words of a choral anthem by John Rutter express it best: "The light was always there, if we could but see it, and warmth was in the air, if we'd known how to feel. Turn your eyes to the Light. Turn your face to the sun. New light, new hope, New Year." - Steve McMillen

Calendar of Events

Ash Wednesday Services February 17th at 12:15 and 7:00pm.

Vestry Meeting Sunday February 21st after the 10:00am service.

February



1st	Adam Moderow	20th	Lan Pinney
8th	Thomas Nord, Sr.	22nd	Sydney Mitchell
10th	Carol Francis	24th	John Reining, Sr.
12th	Noah Watson	25th	Asia Chesterton
16th	Evelyn Appiah	26th	Linda Locascio
17th	Wayne Conroy	27th	Del Bear

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.



4th	George & Lynn Davis
18th	Dick & Nelda Worthington

Deadline for the March Messenger will be February 19th.

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Miracles
Happen

February Newsletter