

The Messenger July 2021

Rector's Corner

Important information regarding Phase 5

On June 16th, in response to Illinois moving into Phase 5 of reopening, the Diocese of Chicago suspended all COVID guidelines except one: we shall not yet return to use of the common cup at Holy Communion. Beyond that, further decisions on safety protocols are left to each church to discern what is best for their particular context.

For Grace Church, that means masks will now be optional, but strongly recommended for those who have not been vaccinated. My own children will continue to wear theirs (Charlie to the best of his 2 year old ability), as they are not yet eligible for vaccination. We also need to be mindful that there may be some in our congregation with underlying health conditions that prohibit them from receiving the vaccine, or those who are immunocompromised (myself included) for whom the protection of the vaccine might not be as potent.

Though the legalities of asking for proof of vaccination have been widely debated among clergy from multiple denominations, I have no intention or desire to engage in this practice. While we are still learning about virus variants, the science supports vaccine safety and effectiveness for most people. What I can do is continue to encourage you to receive your dose, if you have not already, out of Christian love for neighbor and my own personal opinion that it is meet and right so to do. I will say that, through casual conversation

with many of you, I do not get the impression this is much of an issue for our congregation.

Singing has returned to the service. The hymnals are back in the pews and await us to make a joyful noise, though I admit it will be a gradual process for me as I knock the rust off these pipes. It turns out when I haven't chanted the Eucharist in fifteen months, it is not quite as easy as hopping back on the proverbial bike.

Altar servers and ushers may resume their duties, except bearing the chalice, of course. I will get schedules worked out for those positions in short order and go over any specific changes with those who serve in those ministries. Speaking of which, we could always use more volunteers, so if you have never served up at the altar or as an usher or as a reader and would like to, please contact me. We are also seeking new people to serve on the Altar Guild.

That brings us to service times. Our original splitting of the congregation into two service times (a year ago this month), was strictly in response to COVID and the need to be able to socially distance ourselves in our worship space. Having spoken to members of the Vestry and those in the medical field who are keeping a weather eye on the delta variant that is currently wreaking havoc in Missouri, I have decided to keep us at two services, 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., for most of July. I want to be mindful of those in our Grace family who are still discerning their comfort level with a return to in-person worship, especially now that we have removed masks and are singing. I ask that you please join me in this consideration and be patient.

That said, my plan is to reevaluate mid-July, and if it looks as though Illinois and Stephenson County are still in good shape with respect to any variants, we will recombine ourselves into one service, one congregation, on July 25th at 9:00 a.m. This will be my last Sunday before going on vacation and will set the precedent for one service, and therefore the need for only one service to be covered by a Morning Prayer leader for the Sundays I am absent.

I anticipate that a consolidated service at 9:00 will be a bit frustrating for some, especially as we have gotten used to a

return, albeit for emergency purposes, to the format Grace had before voting to change it years ago. Shortly before the pandemic, based on some conversations, I thought I would conduct a litmus test concerning our 9:00 service time since I did not know who identified as 8:00ers versus 10:00ers. The responses I received were split 50/50, with those who favor an earlier service asking not to have to sacrifice yet another hour, and those who favor a later service asking that we please go to 10:00. That test tells me that Grace struck a fair compromise when you voted to go to one 9:00 service.

There are a number of reasons for returning to one service, not least of which is being a unified Body of Christ again. From a practical standpoint, though, it really boils down to human resources. Simply put, when the pool of readers, servers, ushers, and Altar Guild is already small, chopping it in half only complicates things and begins to burn people out.

A few other items: I will continue to stream Sunday services and Wednesday evening Compline. Coffee hour can resume, though we need to be diligent in our use of tongs and serving utensils. There is a box of gloves in the kitchen for handling ready-to-eat food, which is required even if we were not in a pandemic. For now, we will continue coffee hour on a volunteer basis with those interested signing up to host a Sunday. I was not here to see how that worked when Grace had two services, so I trust that those who wish to stay for fellowship and coffee will figure out how to make that happen. For those who participate in coffee hour setup and cleanup, I will be delighted to show you how the new dishwasher works!

That is a lot to report, but we are moving in a positive direction. Slowly but surely, we are entering into a new phase here at Grace and our wider community. As our Savior Jesus Christ has promised, all things will be made new. Through prayer, patience, and love, we will all arrive there together safely.

Blessings, Fr. Brian

Grace Church News & Upcoming Events

All women of Grace Church are invited to ECW's monthly meetings. This month, we will meet on Friday, July 9th at 11:30. We have invited Amy Korte, Director of FACC (Freeport Area Church Cooperative), to join us and tell us about the programs available and her new leadership role. Last month, ECW voted to give FACC \$500. This check will be presented to Ms. Korte at our meeting.

Now that we've reached Stage 5 of the Pandemic restrictions and can once again meet for a meal, we are celebrating with a catered lunch. Gail has arranged for a vegetarian meal of asparagus quiche, broccoli salad, and cookies. Please let me know if you will be joining us.

Also voted on at our last meeting was to send the Diocesan ECW our Fair Share as we've done for many years. Linda wrote a note to accompany our check (\$450) to the Marian Medical Mission to provide a well for clean drinking water in Malawi, Tanzania, or Zambia, South Africa. Education to maintain the equipment will also be provided. Our thanks to our treasurer, Sandy, for keeping track of our finances.

Phyllis is working on scheduling the United Thank Offering In-gathering in July. Please watch the Sunday bulletin for more information.

Laurie volunteered to plant flowers in the pots at the church doors, and several ladies will see that the pots are watered during the week.

We also discussed the need for help when we participate in the downtown Eats and Beats festival. We will need many giant cookies baked and lots of folks to sign up to work in our booth. (August 27th & 28th)

Drum roll.....we have scheduled our Rummage Sale for October 7th and 8th. We will be setting up on the 5th and 6th. Please mark your calendars and plan to help as much as you're able.

A big THANKS to everyone who volunteered to help get the ECW train back on the tracks after the Covid derailment.

Peace and love,
Connie B.

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815-789-3181

The hymn "Count Your Many Blessings, Name Them One By One" comes to mind as I think about the United Thank Offering. It's a tangible way we can reach out to do good in our world of need. It's time again to make our gratitude visible, real, and manifest in an offering to be collected from our Grace family on July 25. Use the enclosed envelope to pass on blessings through the ECW United Thank Offering, on, before or even after church July 25.

Sincerely, Phyllis

Coffee hour sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board by the kitchen. Coffee and juice are provided by the church. When you sign up you are responsible for cleaning up afterwards.

Prall Family Vacation The Pralls will be on vacation from July 27th to August 13th. We will be making our annual pilgrimage to the family cabin in the Adirondacks, as well as stops to see the kids' Godparents. I will not be securing a supply priest, as this region of the diocese frankly does not have any. If anyone would be interested in leading Morning Prayer for services on August 1 or the 8th, please get in touch with me.

Thanks,
Fr. Brian

Outreach Opportunities

FACC is presently accepting volunteers for a number of different roles from the pantry to the shelter to the office and more. For more information, volunteer information sheets are available in the narthex, or you may contact FACC's executive director, Amy Korte, at amyfacc@aeroinc.net or 815-233-0435 ext. 4.

The Children's Hands-On Museum (CHOM), located at the Lincoln Mall, is accepting volunteers to help during their operating hours. When the Prall family has taken their kids there, it has typically been their board president working all alone. To learn more about volunteering, please call 630-484-1855. To learn more about this wonderful resource for educational play, please visit www.chomnwil.org



July

4th Ann Elmer
6th Owen Helm
19th Martha Furst

5th Brian & Ellen Prall
11th Skip & Mary Lehnhard
Tony & Nicole Bolotnik
19th John & Elizabeth Woodward

Deadline for the August "Messenger" will be July 22nd.

Refresh my soul

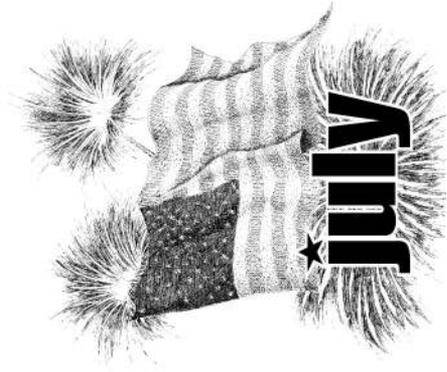
It's so easy to get caught up in
this fast-paced, rapid-fire world and to forget
the peace that passes all understanding,
the love that casts out all fear.

So slow me down, Lord.

Steady me.

Infuse my life with harmony and calm
and refresh my soul in you.

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July Newsletter