



The Messenger

January 2022

Rector's Message

Greetings and happy New Year!

“Inconceivable!” was the refrain of the villainous Vizzini in one of my all-time favorite films, *The Princess Bride*. While Vizzini’s henchman, Inigo, questioned whether or not this word means what his boss thinks it means, I feel pretty confident that *inconceivable* appropriately describes the past two years. After all, we are but a few short months from making a second lap around the calendar in a time of global pandemic. The exhaustion, confusion, and anger are taking an immense toll on everyone, especially as it seems like every step forward ends with two steps back.

In the Church, it has been terribly difficult to plan for much of anything. Last year we postponed our Annual Meeting, with the diocese’s blessing, and at that time I don’t believe the word “indefinitely” even came to mind. The vaccines were rolling out and all would soon be right with the world. Oops.

Canon 22 of the Diocesan Constitution and Canons states that the parish Annual Meeting shall be held in January or February. In our December Zoom meeting with Bishop Chilton, one priest asked what guidance there was for Annual Meetings this year. Bishop Chilton said she was loath to gaze in her crystal ball concerning Annual Meetings yet, as again, it is impossible to know where things will be month to month, week to week, sometimes even day to day.

While we are certainly familiar with this reality here at Grace Church, I am still in favor of having a plan in place even if we need to alter or scrap it. Therefore, we will be having our Annual Meeting after church on Sunday, January 23rd. The meeting will take place in the nave, so you don't even need to get up from your pew. Given the diocesan mask mandate and the overall acoustics of the room, we do have a wireless handheld mic that I would ask anyone who wishes to address the congregation with comment or question to please use. This will likely necessitate me harnessing my inner daytime talk show host, running around and handing off the microphone, but I up for it.

As I reported a few months ago, the Vestry was able to come up with a system of reducing numbers while maintaining a consistent election of two new members at each Annual Meeting. With that in mind, we are looking for two people who would be willing to serve on the Vestry for a three-year term each. The commitment is essentially 90 minutes a month. Every third Sunday of the month we meet after the service to discuss the business of the church and I try very diligently to not exceed an hour and a half.

There are also other opportunities to serve Grace Church that I will present at the Annual Meeting. This pandemic may have altered and subdued how we are able to *do* and *be* the Body of Christ through Grace Church, but it has not beaten or stopped us. Grace Episcopal Church is still here and there are things to do for both our parish and our community.

Blessings,
Fr. Brian

Warden's Report

First of all, I must mention that we have been blessed by Father Brian's ministry and so many others who have continued to serve and volunteer during these very, very difficult times. Music, Worship, Altar Guild, Buildings, Church Office, ECW, Greens, Lectors, Worship Assistants, Acolytes and Cross Bearers both tall and growing, member to member ministries, technical help for digital worship and prayer, Vestry, ... I'm going to run out of memory and room, so I apologize to anyone I've left off this list and there are many more. For all we give thanks to God.

Second of all, while the worst of the pandemic largely takes place out of sight in the halls of hospitals with overworked and dwindling staff regionally and nationwide, it also reaches into the homes of many in our community. Your diligence in mask wearing in indoor spaces and distancing is helping to keep our community within Grace and outside of Grace safer. Now is an excellent time for you and I to wear N95 or equivalent masks against this very infectious Omicron variant. Go to [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and type in the search bar: masks. Know that cloth masks, if you wear them, should be at least two layers of cotton, washed before first wearing to expand the fibers for better filtration. If you wear an exam mask like most of us have been wearing, best fit likely obtained by snugging up the ear loops with a small knot, or wearing a well fitting cotton cloth mask over them. The gold standard is a N95 mask, or equivalent. The CDC has a list if you type in the search bar: NIOSH Approved Particulate Filtering Facepiece Respirators. Leave the medical mask versions to those who work directly with COVID-19 patients so that they continue to have enough. Parents magazine has a list of child sized masks on its website.

Covid-19 will diminish in its impact eventually. The variants that survive long term will be the ones that do not kill us, their hosts,

but find it relatively easy to infect us and spread to others. Vaccines and prior illness will confer some immunity. Illness is likely to be less severe. It exists now in wildlife populations without causing the same symptoms, but provides the virus with a reservoir helping to sustain it.

Take care of yourselves and take care of your neighbors.
God's blessings and all good things be with you.

Glenn
Sr. Warden, 2021

Bits and Pieces

Annual Meeting, January 23rd, 2022 All reports for the meeting need to be turned into the office no later than January 14th either electronically (gracechurch@aeroinc.net) or printed in a format ready to be copied for the annual report.

Telephone Directory for 2022 We will be publishing a new directory for 2022. Please let the office know of any changes (phone number, address, family changes, etc.) by January 28, 2022.

Finances Since our January Messenger goes to press prior to the end of the year, the year end financial information will be in the report given at the annual meeting.

As we close out the year, please take a look at your 2021 pledge. If you have a balance due we will happily accept payments in 2022. Just make a notation on the memo line of your check that it is for your 2021 pledge.

We have a proposed budget for 2022, which will come before you at the annual meeting.

Deadline for the February Messenger will be January 22nd

Thank you to everyone at Grace Episcopal Church for the generous Christmas gift.

Connie Olson - church secretary

Card of Thanks

I would like to thank the Grace Church family for your very kind collective gift at Christmas, and for your many individual greetings and expressions of appreciation. Christmas Eve 2021 marked my tenth anniversary on the staff at Grace, and the ministries we pursue together continue to bring me a great deal of fulfillment. I wish you all a joyous Christmastide, and hope and health in the New Year. Steve McMillen

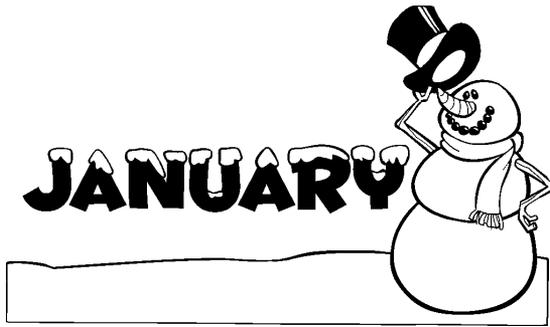
Marion Medical Mission

In March of 2021 ECW donated \$450.00 to the Marion Medical Mission to build a well in Sud-Saharan Africa which has the highest under 5 mortality rate in the world. Safe drinking water means the difference between life and death.

The Well program not only provides safe drinking water, but also the necessary knowledge skills and tools to manage and maintain the protected water source so that safe drinking water continues in the future years. Where wells have been built, water borne diseases are eliminated.

The new well donated by ECW of Grace Episcopal Church Freeport was installed on September 29, 2021 in the village of Loti, Malawi and will serve 50 people.

A picture of the new well and some of the village people can be seen on the bulletin board in the narthex.



Birthdays

6th Larry Miller
14th Judy Connors
17th Drew Rogers
27th Scott Larson
28th Chad Enright

28th Claudia Smith
Nelda Worthington
Stephen Lafferty
29th Chuck Breo

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.

Grr

Did you ever consider that the word grudge starts with the letters gr? Mean animals often “grrr” and so do some mean-spirited people — at least by their nasty demeanor. In order to have the Christmas spirit, our grudges and our “grrrs” are going to have to be eliminated.

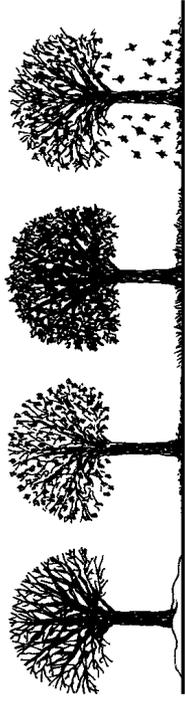
- Christmas is love tugging us back to God with the powerful clasp of a tiny hand reaching out from a bed of straw.

—Unknown

- I’ve learned that love is a great investment. No matter whom you give it to, it returns great dividends.

—Anonymous

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As We Start the New Year

January Newsletter