



The Messenger *August 2022*

Rector's Corner

The Theology of a Sidewalk

A few people have inquired about the ever-widening cavity at the bottom of our handicap ramp and whether or not there are any plans to address it. I do think this glaring and potentially dangerous development does warrant an explanation.

To the best of my knowledge, this hole does not lead to Sheol, but I will admit that tackling the problem has been rather hellish. Though a relatively new problem, it is actually a symptom of Grace Church's on-going issue with the sidewalks and Cherry Avenue, an issue with which many of you are all too familiar. A blockage of some incarnation in the storm sewer at Stephenson and Cherry has prevented rain water from draining away properly for the better part of God knows how long. And as sure as the waters of Meribah miraculously burst forth from rock, the storm water for our local watershed has found alternative means of escape, namely under our sidewalks.

The erosion caused by this process has been enormous. Just as Job observed, "the rock is removed from its place; the waters wear away the stones; the torrents wash away the soil of the earth," there is virtually no earth left underneath any sidewalks along our perimeter, both Cherry and Stephenson. The handicap ramp itself is pulling away from the building and listing

into the hole. The soft fill under the sidewalks has washed away, much of it into our sump pump, which then jettisons it into our parking lot leaving that sandy deposit I affectionately refer to as Grace's Delta. As this material disappears with each tempest, the erosion has reached the blacktopped portions of our property where our parking lot meets the ramp and sidewalk. Blacktop isn't much more than rock with a binder, and without the support of the sublayer of filler, there is nothing to hold it together. Gravity does the rest. I suspect the same is happening, or will be soon, at the entrance to our parking lot, which has a noticeable dip where it meets the sidewalk.

Taking my cue from the prophets of old, twice I wrote to the mayor, city manager, public works director, and alderman for Grace's ward saying, "Woe to you!" and zero times have they heard it, or at least they never responded. I even included a number of pictures, some taken in the midst of a downpour clearly demonstrating the problem. I did have a brief conversation with the public works director. We asked to have the storm sewer scoped with a camera, but then we had to acquire a FOIA request to even get the results, which were inconclusive because it couldn't be properly performed due to a "concrete blockage." The city's narrative at present is that cement contractors once upon a time washed out their equipment right on the street, and over the years all that rinsed off concrete has built up in the storm sewer blocking it. There is no money to do any immediate remediation, but the city is currently pursuing a new round of infrastructure grants, which may or may not be applied to this particular issue.

I did enroll Grace in the city's sidewalk reimbursement program, where the city tears out the sidewalk for free and then reimburses a portion of the bill to have it replaced. After getting bids to the tune of \$15,000, it was determined that such a project would be in vain because it wouldn't address the root cause of erosion. So, we have not pursued that any further. Let the

slab of sidewalk outside the Church Office, which has been leveled once before, be a testament to the church spending money on a symptom without the city providing the cure.

I have made known to you everything that I know, and, long story short, I am aware of the hole and am deeply concerned. I am also concerned that soon our parking lot may be in jeopardy. But it seems we are at a bit of an impasse. The Vestry and I are currently discerning our next options short of going and flipping over tables, though that would certainly be satisfying. The Diocese did have a lawyer call the city to rattle some cages, but to no avail. The sidewalks seem to be okay suspended in space at the moment, and you can tell your friends you attend probably one of the few churches in the world that has a moat. That blacktop, however, will only continue to crumble with each downpour. We will not quit until this is taken care of properly, but I do ask for your patience and especially your prayers. In the mean-time, mind the gap.

Blessings,
Fr. Brian

Gifts

God waved a large, majestic hand
And gave us sky and trees and land.
God gave us birds to chirp each morn
And stout, young rows of bright green corn.
God gave us forests in whose shadows deep
Deer keep watch as their children sleep.
God gave us clouds of fluffy white
To shield us from the sun's bright light.
God gave us homes to keep us warm,
To keep us secure and safe from harm.
In short, God gave us all he could;
God gave us all things great and good.

— Unknown

Grace Church News

A New Trial Run for FACC Meal Ministry

For a couple of years now, Grace Church has diligently provided meals to the clients at FACC every second Thursday of the month. As FACC's ministry continues to grow, smaller parishes like Grace are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their needs with limited resources. Cooking for 20+ people is no small task, and it is certainly not an inexpensive one.

Fr. Brian had a conversation with Amy Korte, FACC's Executive Director, and asked if it would still be possible for Grace to stay involved in this feeding ministry by *sponsoring* a meal. She said that would be "AWESOME". To that end, we will do a trial period of reinstating our previous practice of taking up a collection for FACC, only this time it will be every First Sunday, and our goal is simply \$100 to \$125 to sponsor a meal for our usual slot of the second Thursday of each month. This money will not be applied towards our pantry donations of canned goods nor to our quarterly shelter donation as a parish, which is already built into our annual budget.

Under this model, we are still able to participate in a meaningful way in this ministry, it would distribute the cost among the congregation instead of the individual who signed up for the meal, and no one has to single-handedly cook for that many people.

The first Sunday we will try this new model is August 7th, which is the first Sunday Fr. Brian is back from vacation and the Sunday before our regularly scheduled evening to provide the FACC meal. Loose cash or checks designated for "FACC Meal" in the memo line will be applied to Grace's meal sponsorship.

FACC Donation for August is peanut butter or jelly.

Eats and Beats

Grace Church will once again be participating in the Eats & Beats Festival, which will be held on August 26th and 27th at Freeport's Arts Plaza across from the Public Library. It will be the third annual outing for this event where the food vendors are made up entirely of local non-profits. Grace, which is the only church participating this year, will be selling our now famous giant cookies.

There will be a shift signup sheet in the Narthex for setup, takedown, and staffing of our booth. We need to have that list finalized by August 15th in order to get our wristbands for all our volunteers. Because purchases of food are made through a ticket system, this is an easy, low maintenance event that provides exposure for Grace to the wider public as well as a nice little bit of money for ministry.

The hard work will be on the bakers who graciously donate their time, talent, and treasure to creating our product. There will a signup sheet for bakers as well, though Connie Burden will also be recruiting. She can set you up with the giant cookie recipe, quantity needed, and how we typically package them. The more bakers and the more variety, the better!

ECW First Friday.... Please join with the women of Grace on August 5th at 11:30 in the undercroft. Bring your own lunch. This is a wonderful time for fellowship!

Also, we need lots of big cookies for the Eats and Beats Festival later in the month. Please sign up with your type of cookie. Please call me if you have any questions. 815-789-3181 or cburden43@gmail.com

Father Brian has submitted an article in this Newsletter regarding the Festival. Please read this and sign up to help.

Peace!
Connie B.

Treasurer's Report

Below is a summary of the revenue and expenses for the first 6 months of 2022 compared to the first 6 months of 2021.

	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Total Revenue	87,987	142806	(54,819)
Expenses:			
Personnel Costs	68,071	64,161	3,910
Buildings & Grounds	27,710	24,599	3,111
Diocese Pledge	4,250	3,850	400
Other	<u>7,547</u>	<u>7,550</u>	<u>(3)</u>
Total Expenses	107,578	100,160	7,418
Gain (Loss)	<u>(19,591)</u>	<u>42,646</u>	<u>(62,237)</u>

Our 2022 pledges are still coming in slowly, only \$5,796 in June. However, so far in July we are seeing a significant increase in pledge revenue. I was hoping that we would see this as the year progressed. Our financial report will look a lot better next month.

Our expenses for June were normal and actually a little below normal. Of course it is summer so we do not have any outrageous Nicor bills to pay this time of year. In order to protect us from the rising cost of natural gas we have contracted to buy our gas from a gas provider other than Nicor. Nicor is currently charging \$1.24 per therm. Our cost will be \$.68.49 per therm. This cost will not increase over the 3 year life of the contract. However, if gas prices drop our cost will be reduced to keep our cost below what Nicor is charging.

The Building and Grounds Committee is considering buying our electricity from a solar farm which will reduce our electricity cost. This appears to be a good opportunity. There is a waiting list so our contract can not start until next summer. I will keep you informed.

Duane Price, Treasurer 815-233-0006
daprice@yahoo.com

August



2nd Marissa Routson
7th Kris Shore
Charla Spann
9th Becca Francis
12th Amanda Mitchell
17th Connie Burden

21st Curtis Terpening
24th Shirlee Iverson
30th Madalynn Enright
31st Stacey Terpening
Colin Helm

8th Jon & Laura Watson
18th Chuck & Sandy Terpening
19th Wayne & Diane Conroy
26th John & Connie Burden
27th Brian & Donna Dreier
Jeremy & Jackie Sigafus
29th Nicholas & Claudia Smith

Deadline for the September "Messenger" will be August 23rd

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JOY!

August Newsletter