



The Messenger

January 2023

Rector's Message

Happy New Year!

A couple of months ago, I had occasion to go digging through Grace's archives – old parish registers and the like. While I was hunting around in them, I took a detour to answer something I have always wondered about Grace Church's formation, and that is the gap in time between Grace's first priest, the Rev. James Bentley, in 1850 and the date of 1887 that is chiseled into the cornerstone of our building. Where did the people of Grace call home for the first 37 years?

It turns out, as some of you probably already know, this is Grace's third, and clearly longest-serving, church building. Also, the original congregation wasn't called Grace at first, but Zion. Much of this was explained in a very yellowed newspaper clipping tucked in the register pages about an anniversary celebration for the church long ago. However, I also came across the faded, handwritten source of that historical information, as someone carefully recorded key events from Grace's inception through its subsequent growth, as well as the names of some of the people involved in that journey.

What fascinated me about this glimpse into Grace's origin story is that it captures the heart of what is true about the formation of most churches throughout history: a group of like-minded people in a particular area, desiring to worship and serve God, make a commitment to God and to each other to pool their resources, form, and steward a faith community.

In the current Canons of the Diocese of Chicago, the official process goes like this: “Twenty or more persons of eighteen years and upwards may apply to the Bishop of the Diocese for organization as a Mission.” And if the mission proves itself viable over a period of time, then “Twenty-five or more Communicants of the Church of the age of eighteen years and upward, desirous of organizing a Parish,” shall then go through a similar application process.

However, I believe it is in the initial request to become a Mission that we really see the true spirit of the process. The people state:

We do hereby declare ourselves, individually and collectively, ready to use our best efforts to establish and sustain the regular worship of the Church, and to promote its influence in our neighborhood; and we promise conformity to its Doctrine, Discipline and Worship.

And I think it is interesting to note that clergy are not really mentioned until after these 20-25 people have expressed to the Bishop their prayerfully discerned desire to organize. The people are the life of a church, their passion the pulse of the corporate Body of Christ they have become.

The role of the clergy, while the primary leadership role, is really to shepherd those people in their Episcopal expression of the Christian faith – that ominous sounding “conformity to its Doctrine, Discipline and Worship” part. What this includes, though, is administration of the sacraments, oversight of the liturgy, pastoral care, teaching the faith, and performing “other ministrations entrusted to [them],” which is *Prayer Book* for “all other duties as assigned.”

In the end, though, it is about the people. Priests come and priests go, and the average tenure among the 33 priests who have served Grace Church is about five years. The people who call Grace Church home, and have called it home for many more years

than that, are responsible for ensuring its continued ministry in worship and service to the community for years to come.

To that end, our Annual Meeting is fast approaching at the end of January, and we will be selecting two new people to serve on the Vestry, Episco-speak for “church board.” Human resources are increasingly difficult to come by for all facets of parish life, particularly in churches our size. But while the liturgy can still be conducted in the sparsest of formats, a parish in the Episcopal Church cannot function without a Vestry, who is responsible for the stewardship and business of the parish. The Canonical minimum is five people, two Wardens and three others. In 2023 we will have six, with the hopes of dropping no lower. The commitment is really not that onerous – a meeting once a month of 90 minutes or less, and I ask that you try to check your email at least once a day just in case there are time sensitive decisions to be made. That’s it. I pray in the weeks to come before the Annual Meeting you discern if perhaps your gifts can benefit Grace’s Vestry.

Finally, now that the worst of the pandemic is hopefully behind us, I think it is time to start thinking about some new goals for Grace Church. Again, the Annual Meeting would be a great opportunity to brainstorm. What is our vision for 2023 and beyond? Such goals would NOT be a compilation of things Fr. Brian could do. I have plenty. These would be goals we hope to achieve together as a faith community, e.g., mission focused projects, special liturgies, fellowship opportunities, Bible studies, spiritual formation, special topic studies, movie nights, etc. Does our parish life together extend beyond an hour on Sunday? If so, help me build that vision. It is, after all, your church.

Blessings,
Fr. Brian

Bits and Pieces

People of Grace Breakfast - January 21st, 8:00am at 9 East Coffee Shop. All are welcome to attend.

Annual Meeting, January 22, 2023 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.

ECW News December's First Friday gathering saw many busy hands at work preparing Christmas goodie boxes for our Shut-ins. Many thanks to these dedicated women for spreading Grace's love as they delivered them.

With all good wishes, Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year to you! Connie B.

Telephone Directory for 2023 We will be publishing a new directory for 2023. Please let the office know of any changes (phone number, address, family changes, etc.) by January 27, 2023.

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2023 Sign up sheet is now posted in the narthex. The cost of altar flowers is \$33.00. Sometime during the month you are signed up for weekly flowers turn in a check for \$33.00 (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.

Treasurer's Report

Below is a comparison of the actual results for the 11 months ending November 30th compared to the annual budget.

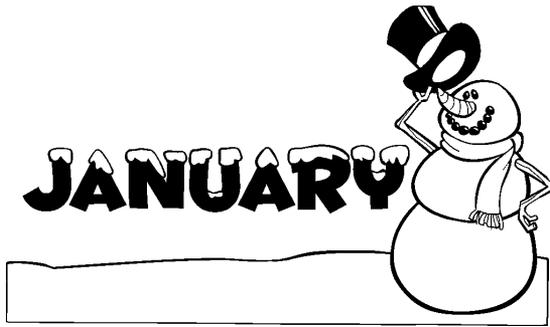
	11 months actual results	2022 Annual Budget	Difference
Total Revenue	197,189	197,702	(513)
Expenses:			
Personnel Costs	119,958	134,299	(14,341)
Building & Grounds	37,390	46,512	(9,122)
Diocese Pledge	7,792	8,500	(708)
Other	14,854	25,348	(10,494)
Total Expenses	<u>179,994</u>	<u>214,659</u>	<u>(34,665)</u>
Gain (Loss)	17,195	(16,957)	34,152

If you look at the total revenue we have received in the first 11 months, you will see that we have almost received what was budgeted for the whole year.

At the end of November we have an excess of \$17,194. However, we have some larger expenses that will be paid in December so I expect that we will end the year with a deficit.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Duane Price, Treasurer
815-233-0006
daprice68@yahoo.com



Birthdays

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

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

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.

Deadline for the February Messenger will be January 20th

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.

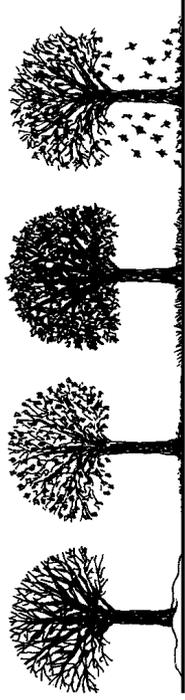
- I’ve learned that love is a great investment. No matter whom you give it to, it returns great dividends.

—Anonymous

Prayer from Book Of Common Prayer

“This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus.” Amen.

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As We Start the New Year

January Newsletter