



The Messenger

February 2023

Rector's Report

During the height of the pandemic shutdown, the language of the Church – in sermons, newsletters, ecclesiastical messages, devotionals, etc. – appealed to the stories of the Exile, as told to us through the eyes of the prophets and the psalmists. That historic tragedy, when the Babylonian Empire destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and deported large numbers of Judeans across hundreds of miles of desert, became a point of reference for people of faith to grapple with our own present trauma.

Over the past year, we have been slowly picking up the pieces of our common life together as a faith community, trying to recover from the greatest disruption to our worship and fellowship that we, as the corporate Body of Christ, have likely ever experienced. This process has not been without its challenges: trying to get energy and enthusiasm back up, getting back into certain routines, sifting through the variations of institutional memory, and daring to ask the question – “How do we want to do things *now*?”

I found myself wondering what it must have been like for those exiles when they returned home. Their exile was seventy years, as opposed to our paltry two. How did they navigate a return to tradition practically a generation removed; rebuilding the temple and ushering in the Second Temple period? What was lost? What remained the same? And what was different just because that was how they saw a way forward in their present time and space?

In 2022, we saw the return of in-person worship without another closure (thank God). We were able to sing once again. We could handle worship materials, like Prayer Books and Hymnals, offering plates and the Eucharistic elements. Masking became optional, though not all agreed with that decision. And at long last, the Common Cup returned, albeit with a few diocesan caveats with respect to intinction.

Participation in “extracurriculars” saw a bit of a boost this past year as well. Lenten soup suppers, the Agapé Meal, the People of Grace Breakfast, the Rummage Sale, St. Andrew’s Day, and the Advent Dinner were all back. A handful of you came out for FACC’s Hunger Luncheon and their shelter/pantry Open House during Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. This year’s ecumenical Thanksgiving Worship Service saw the most representation from Grace Church in all the years I have been here, which brought my heart joy.

I would love to see this energy and enthusiasm continue to build into the next year. I would love to see more fellowship and formation opportunities, more liturgical offerings, more group-oriented buildings and grounds stewardship (read landscaping and maintenance), more community involvement...just MORE. Believe it or not, I enjoy y’all’s company, so the more opportunities to hang out with you, the better. If we happen to do the Lord’s work and make Grace Episcopal Church a prominent force for good in the community in the process, that isn’t half bad either.

Here are a few new things Grace will be doing in the year to come: Grace is in the planning stages for becoming the meeting site for a local grief group specifically for people who have lost children, regardless of age. Previously the group met in Lena, which was inconvenient for many of them, and prohibitive for others who wanted to participate but could not make the drive. The pastor who ran it is looking to retire, so they are seeking to carry on in another location closer to home. The group will be fairly self-sufficient, though I have offered to participate in

meetings as much or as little as they feel comfortable. If you or anyone you know might be interested in participating in this group, please let me know.

Presently, the Vestry is discerning the sponsorship of a transportation fund with our Outreach dollars. The fund would be stewarded by FACC, but benefit a few non-profits in partnership with FACC. Often FACC, Salvation Army, or VOICES have clients that need transportation to appointments, jobs, or permanent relocation to other municipalities. Fuel, taxi services, and bus tickets have been a huge expense on these ministries, one for which they do have the budget. Grace is discerning the opportunity to use some of our designated Outreach money to fund a grant for such expenses.

In the spring, the Rebuilding Together Stephenson County side project I have been a part of will resume operation on local houses in need of repair. Stay tuned for project details and work dates, and if you feel like painting or swinging a hammer, we would love to add you to our volunteer list.

These, as well as the resurrected events and offerings listed above, are just a few of the things to look forward to at Grace this coming year. And, of course, I am always open to new and exciting opportunities you might dream up. For example, earlier today a few people were brainstorming outside my office about a project that involves going through Grace's photo archives, and cataloging and displaying a comprehensive photographic history of Grace Episcopal Church. I have been wanting to do that forever! How awesome is that!

On Sundays we give "Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (Eph. 3:20). May we believe this about ourselves as a faith community, that with God working in us so many great things are possible for our Church and for the community of Freeport; so long as we have vision, drive, and commitment. What is our vision for Grace in this next year, and how can *you* help build that vision?

Yours in Christ, Fr. Brian Prall, Rector

Treasurer's Report

Our budget for 2022 had a deficit of \$17,000. However, we ended the year with an excess of \$4,000. Our income was \$4,400 more than budgeted and our expenses \$16,700 less than budgeted. At the end of the year our cash reserves for the Church Operating Fund were \$120,000. This is important in case we have some large expenses which we cannot pay for with our regular annual income.

There is more good news. Our budget for 2023 has an excess of revenue over expenses. It is a small excess \$750, but it is always good to start the year with an excess. One item that I would like to highlight is that our pledges for 2023 are \$14,000 more than 2022. This is an increase of 9.5%.

I am looking for another good year in 2023. As usual, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Duane Price
Treasurer

Bits and Pieces

FACC Monthly Donation for February is canned chili.

Annual Meeting Report If you would like a copy please contact the church office. They will also be available in the narthex.

ECW First Friday Lunch Friday, February 3rd at 11:30am.

Ash Wednesday February 22nd. Service times TBD.

Vestry Meeting Sunday February 19th after the 9:00am service.

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2023 Please remember that 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.

Telephone Directory for 2023 will be available starting Sunday, February 12th.

Grace Episcopal Church

10 S. Cherry Avenue, Freeport, IL 61032

Rector office hours: 8:00 - 5:00pm Tuesday through Thursday

Fridays by appointment only

Secretary office hours: 8:00am – 1:00pm

Tuesday through Thursday

Office is closed on Mondays

Phone: 815-232-4422 Fax: 815-235-4542

E-mail: gracechurch@aeroinc.net

E-mail: fr.brianprall@gmail.com

Grace Episcopal Church WEB Site gracechurchfreeport.org

The Rt. Rev. Paula Clark, Bishop of Chicago

Rector:	Fr. Brian Prall
Ministers:	The People of Grace Church
Secretary:	Connie Olson
Wardens:	Katie Enright, Senior Warden Chuck Breo, Junior Warden
Treasurer:	Duane Price
Clerk:	Mike Shore
Vestry:	*Deborah Lischwe, Marissa Routson, Chuck Terpening and *Mike Shore
Director of Music:	Steve McMillen
Organists:	Steve McMillen and Laura Watson
Altar Guild:	Peggy Isaac

* New Vestry members

February



1st	Adam Moderow	16th	Stanley Crowe
8th	Thomas Nord, Sr.	17th	Wayne Conroy
9th	Jim French	20th	Lan Pinney
10th	Carol Francis	22nd	Sydney Mitchell
12th	Noah Watson	25th	Asia Chesterton
13th	Glenn Gungel	26th	Linda Locascio
16th	Evelyn Appiah		

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 17th.

Grace Episcopal Church of Freeport
10 S. Cherry Avenue
Freeport, IL. 61032
815-232-4422



Miracles
Happen

February Newsletter