



The Messenger

February 2024

Rector's Report

“Repent ye; for the season of Lent is at hand!” Or it will be shortly.

February 14th, Valentine’s Day, already an emotionally conflicting day for me, will add yet another layer this year with our observance of Ash Wednesday. It is one of two major *fasts* on our liturgical calendar – the other being Good Friday – and it serves as our ritual entrance into Lent, a season of penitence, self-reflection, and prayer.

Given this year’s unique timing of Ash Wednesday on Valentine’s Day, the Internet has already delivered some levity to the otherwise solemn occasion as only church humorists can; my favorite so far being a priest drawing a heart with the ashes on someone’s forehead in lieu of the traditional cross. I pondered putting my own sendup of this rather amusing juxtaposition between Valentine’s and Ash Wednesday in our church sign. Something like, “Ash Wednesday, February 14, 6:30 p.m. Repent... and then go out for a nice romantic dinner.”

I must admit I am a little wary of this combination coming our way. For me, Valentine’s Day has historically been a bad day – illnesses, embarrassing failures, and one major tragedy. And when I think about it, Ash Wednesday has not fared much better – scheduling issues, the pandemic, and an ice storm last year. With a convergence of the two this year, y’all might not want to stand

too close to me. While I typically do not believe in curses, here is hoping that whatever negative vibes seem to plague me on these two days will cancel each other out by falling on the same day. So who knows, it could be the best Ash Wednesday service, or I might trip on my alb and hit the deck in a cloud of spilled ash. Either way, the service will begin at 6:30 p.m. on February 14th.

To accompany us on our Lenten journey, I have ordered the *Living Well through Lent 2024* devotionals published by Living Compass. These will be available in the narthex as well as outside the church office. Some years the reflections and questions are better than others, but I find that simply having the discipline of reading and engaging in the questions, or even looking up referenced passages of scripture, can be fruitful. That if nothing else, at least I can pick up this little booklet once a day, and for a few minutes do the work of self-reflection and prayer.

Due to inclement weather, I postponed our January formation gathering that was to look at *forgiveness*. It seems like a better topic going into Lent anyway, so Sunday, February 11th, we will begin our discussion on forgiveness, again, beginning with research conducted by psychologist Dr. Everett Worthington, Jr., who specializes in the study of forgiveness and reconciliation. And from his work, we will transition into what our Christian faith teaches us on the subject of forgiveness, and how we are forgiven by God's grace through Christ.

Lastly, we will once again be holding our Lenten Soup Suppers on Wednesday evenings beginning on February 21st at 5:30pm. It will strictly be a fellowship event. By popular demand, I will not be making any presentations or fumbling with flip charts. So please look for the signup sheet on the bulletin board outside the kitchen, and if you would like to bless us with your soup making or bread baking abilities, do not hesitate to put your name down for a Wednesday.

As you prepare to enter into the holy season of Lent, a season “self-examination and repentance,” of “prayer, fasting, and self-denial,” and of “reading and meditating on God’s holy Word,” may God’s abundant grace and mercy sustain you in your work, removing the barriers in your life that stand between you and the fullness of life found in the Risen Christ.

Blessings,
Fr. Brian

Grace Recycling Discontinued: While the Big Green collection box has not been out for use in quite some time, I wanted to take a moment to officially say that we will no longer be collecting used batteries, CFL lightbulbs, fluorescent lighting, etc. for special disposal. This ministry that was so faithfully stewarded by Doris and Keith Chesterton did not have anyone to take it up after Keith passed away.

That said, most common household batteries (AAA, AA, C, D) are alkaline batteries, which can be disposed of in your household trash. CFL Bulbs (compact fluorescent), or the ones that spiral like rotini pasta, can be recycled at Home Depot or Lowe’s home improvement stores. There were bags of them in a St. Stephen’s closet that I took to the Lowe’s in my hometown, and the bin was right by the entrance. Regular fluorescent tube lighting should be taken to a reclamation center like the one in Rockford. Grace has accumulated many, many of these that still need to be taken and disposed of, as I have replaced many burnt out ones over the past few year with LEDs.

Fr. Brian

Server Schedule

February 4th

Chalicerist: Carol Francis
Lector: Laurie Gungel
Acolyte: Lucy Prall
Ushers: Dick Hepner & Jon Watson

February 11th

Chalicerist: Chuck Terpening
Lector: Gail Hunt
Acolytes: Lucy Prall
Ushers: Chad Enright & Jeff Francis

February 18th

Chalicerist: Chuck Breo
Lector: Claudia Smith
Acolyte: Lucy Prall
Ushers: Dick Hepner & Jon Watson

February 25th

Chalicerist: Carol Francis
Lector: Phyllis Bergagna
Acolyte: Lucy Prall
Ushers: Chad Enright & Jeff Francis

If you are unable to serve on the dates assigned, please make sure you get someone to replace you and notify the church office.

Bits and Pieces

FACC Monthly Donation for February is canned chili or beans.

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

Christian Formation Class - February 11th after the 9:00am service.

Ash Wednesday Service February 14th at 6:30pm.

People of Grace Breakfast February 17th, 8:00am at Nine East Coffee Shop.

Vestry Meeting Sunday February 18th after the 9:00am service.

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2024 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.

Treasurer's Report

Below is an analysis comparing the actual results for 2023 compared to the annual budget.

| | 2023 Results | 2023 Annual Budget | Amount Over/Under Budget |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total Revenue | 222,481 | 219,832 | 2,649 |
| Expenses: | | | |
| Personnel Costs | 136,591 | 138,922 | (2,331) |
| Building & Grounds | 53,736 | 50,767 | 2,969 |
| Property & Liability Insurance | 22,190 | 14,147 | 8,043 |
| Other Expenses | <u>15,003</u> | <u>16,403</u> | <u>(1,400)</u> |
| Total Expenses | 227,520 | 220,239 | 7,281 |
| Gain (Loss) | (5,039) | (407) | (4,632) |

The \$5,039 deficit was caused by an extra payment for Property & Liability Insurance in 2023. Usually we are billed twice a year for our insurance. However, in 2022 the payment usually paid in December was billed and paid in January 2023. Since there was only 1 payment in 2022 we had a \$4,000 excess and in 2023 we were billed for 3 payments which caused the deficit. Over the 2 year period, it all evened out and we did not pay more or less than normal.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

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

February



1st Adam Moderow
8th Thomas Nord, Sr.
9th Jim French
10th Carol Francis
12th Noah Watson
13th Glenn Gungel
16th Evelyn Appiah

16th Stanley Crowe
17th Wayne Conroy
20th Lan Pinney
25th Asia Chesterton
26th Linda Locascio
27th Del Bear

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

Deadline for the March Messenger will be February 20th.

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Miracles
Happen

February Newsletter