



The Messenger

December 2025

Rector's Message

Greetings and blessings to you all this season of Advent!

Over ten years ago, Ellen, baby Lucy, and I went to stay with my aunt and uncle in Newtown, CT, while we visited Berkely Divinity School at Yale as a possibility for my seminary education. On the ride to Yale, my aunt said that one of the most unexpected things she missed about the Midwest after moving there was the “courtesy merge” – as you proceed along an on-ramp, those already cruising along the highway instinctively change lanes to allow you to merge onto the highway safely. Or, with roles reversed, you are that person who kindly scooches over.

Not so on the East Coast, apparently.

I have had one other occasion to be out that way, and sure enough, my driver, who seemed like a kind and ordinary individual, became a force to be reckoned with on the highway. Slow down, speed up, whatever, just get the hell out of the way. I had no idea until then how much the courtesy merge figured into my overall faith in humanity.

This year's *Living Compass* Advent devotional focuses on *generosity*, and it is around this time of year that we begin to see an uptick in appeals for our generosity from this organization or that. It is a good thing, ultimately (though eliminating need altogether would be better), to support endeavors to make as joyous a holiday season as possible for those in need. Between

Grace Church and my personal mailbox, I get dozens of mailers asking for monetary support, mostly, and it can be a little daunting. Who do you help when there is so much need?

Monetary and material giving – like toys at Christmas, winter coat drives, or food for a local pantry – are terrific ways to put our faith into action. Presently I am reading the Letter of James, who makes the argument that faith AND works are essential to Christian living: “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.”

Each of us lives out our faith through generosity in different ways. But there something elemental in our Christian living that goes beyond simply mailing a check off to a particular ministry, or dropping toys in a Salvation Army barrel, as important as that is (please do that). It is a *generosity of spirit* that comes from our oneness in Christ and compels us to show empathy, exercise compassion, and, yes, even offer generously from our own material resources. In Christ, we have been commanded to share the Holy Spirit (a spirit of generosity in itself) with others by loving them as Christ loves us. It is this spirit that informs our way of being, that provides the foundation underlying something even as seemingly trivial as the courtesy merge.

As we move through this season of holy anticipation, awaiting the coming of God’s incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, I invite you to meditate on *generosity*. In what ways can you show generosity of spirit, not just through charitable giving, but by putting forth Christ’s spirit of love in your daily life and work? In what ways can you bring kindness, cheer, patience, and hope to others? How can you signal to your fellow travelers it is safe to merge and join you on the journey?

I wish you all a prayerful and spiritually nourishing Advent as we wait for our Immanuel.

Peace,
Fr. Brian

Living Compass Advent Devotionals are Available: You may pick one up in the narthex or outside the church offices.

Advent Quiet Dinner: Grace Church will be hosting its annual Advent Quiet Dinner on Wednesday, December 10th, at 5:30 p.m. Join us for a peaceful meal in the middle of this season of hopeful anticipation as we await the birth of Jesus. Everything will be provided. Just come as you are and find peace in the moment.

Advent Lessons and Carols: Highland Community College's Royal Scots singers reached out to Grace wanting to collaborate on something festive for the season. The request was to not simply offer a concert in our sanctuary, but to integrate it into something liturgical. On Thursday evening, December 11th, at 7:00 p.m. Highland's Royal Scots will be joining Fr. Brian in celebrating the Advent Lessons and Carols. Believe it or not, it is something Fr. Brian has never participated in before. Please join us for an evening of music, scripture, and prayer.

Christmas Services

Wednesday, December 24th

Christmas Eve

Carols and Special Music

7:00pm

Eucharist

7:30pm

Thursday, December 25th

Eucharist

9:00am

Treasurer Report

Below is an analysis comparing the actual results for the first 10 months of this year to the annual budget. At this time in the year we expect our revenue and expenses to be around 83% of the total amounts budgeted.

	10 Months Results	2025 Annual Budget	Per Cent Of Budget
Total Revenue	205,812	224,682	92%
Expenses:			
Personnel Costs	123,334	148,458	83%
Building & Grounds	46,542	61,636	76%
Other	22,208	32,300	69%
Total Expenses	<u>192,084</u>	<u>242,394</u>	<u>79%</u>
Gain (Loss)	13,728	(17,712)	

The annual budget anticipates a deficit for the year of \$17,712. At the end of October we have an excess of revenue over expenses of \$13,728. This is misleading because we have a couple of large expenses to pay in November and December. One of which is Property and Liability insurance which will be about \$14,000. Also, we have already received a large portion of our pledges in the first 10 months so our income will decline. Be assured that we will have a deficit at the end of the year as anticipated by the budget. Please call me if you have any questions.

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

Grace Church News

ECW First Friday Lunch All women of Grace Church are invited to our monthly gathering on December 5th at 11:30am. We will meet in the undercroft. Please bring your own lunch. Coffee and tea will be provided. We will be assembling holiday boxes for our homebound members and would love for you to join us. If you would like to contribute to this project, please choose an item and bring 10.

Small candy canes

Cookies (individually wrapped)

Chex mix (in small baggies)

Tea bags (individually wrapped)

Pretzels, plain or coated
(in small baggies)

Stamps

Christmas candy

Chapstick

Small holiday ornaments

Small hand creams

Other ideas???

Please let me know which item you plan on bringing so we don't have duplicates. We will also have Christmas cards to sign for each person. We will deliver these boxes after the meeting. That's always a special time!

Also, we will be setting up for a funeral reception which will take place on Saturday, December 6th.

Looking forward to seeing you all. Please give me a call or message me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your support in keeping our ECW a dependable and active group. Many hands make light work! God bless you all.

Peace,

Connie B. 815-789-3181 cburden43@gmail.com

FACC First Sunday Meal Donation is Sunday, December 7th. This goes to sponsor a meal for our usual slot of the second Thursday of each month.

Grace Church News (continued)

Advent 2025 Quiet Meal Wednesday, December 10th at 5:30pm. “A Time Of Preparation”. Join us this Advent Season for a quiet, peaceful meal together in the middle of this season full of anticipation as we await the birth of Jesus. Nothing to bring, no worry or planning—just come as you are and find peace in the moment. Contact Carol Francis at 815-335-2266, Father Brian at 815-993-3225 or the church office for more information.

People of Grace Breakfast - Saturday, December 20th, 8:00am at 9 East Coffee Shop. All are welcome to attend.

Christmas Flower Donation It is time to place our order with the florist for the wreaths and flowers. We depend on your donations to cover the cost of the wreaths and plants. During the week following Christmas the plants are delivered to homes and nursing homes. There is an envelope included in this Messenger. Please return your donation for flowers along with any names or intentions to be remembered at the Christmas Service.

Weekly Altar Flowers for 2026 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.

Hanging of the Greens - Sunday, December 21st after the 9:00am service.



December

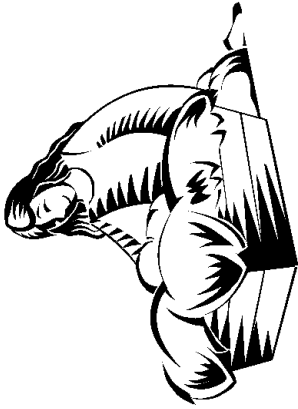
1st	Heather Becker	17th	Doris Chesterton
3rd	Brian Chesterton	20th	Charlie Prall
4th	Duane Price	21st	Mary Lockwood
6th	Marilyn Hepner		Elizabeth Maize
10th	Steve Holbert	23rd	Carol Price
14th	Elizabeth Woodward	24th	Allison Gush
17th	Bernard Lischwe	29th	Daniel Bonsky
		30th	Mark Helm

28th Neil & Rose Dreier

Deadline for the January Newsletter is December 16th.

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

Merry
Christmas



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