



The Messenger

February 2026

Rector's Report

In a recent letter to the congregation, I announced my decision to move on from Grace Church and Freeport. While it grieves me deeply in so many ways to say goodbye, I am proud to have had this past year close out my tenure here.

First and foremost, we were able to celebrate Grace's 175th Anniversary, which is a remarkable milestone for any parish. I want to thank all those who shared their creativity, vision, and hard work in making this celebration a wonderful *series* of events, honoring not only the history and legacy of Grace Church, but also highlighting the abundance of vibrant, loving, and talented people who make up our congregation in the present.

This year we were also blessed with a few new faces in the congregation. In fact, last June we had the privilege of baptizing three siblings, receiving them into the corporate Body of Christ, the Church. It is my fervent prayer that all who have come to Grace Church in the last year continue to find in it a spiritual home that is welcoming and transformative. I also pray even more new faces come see all that Grace has to offer when they step beyond the red doors, bringing with them a renewed energy and spirit. Lastly, I pray for the return of those who have stepped away from Grace Church for a while, that they may they find friendship, fellowship, and the Lord's loving embrace here once again.

Our ministries to the community have continued to thrive. Grace's commitment to Freeport Area Church Cooperative's shelter and pantry, through funds and donated food items,

helped to stem the tide of need in Freeport during a rather turbulent year for social services. As their board president, I am excited to add that FACC recently entered into an agreement with UIC-Rockford to become part of their Street Medicine program, in which medical residents gain field experience by offering medical services to shelter clients, the unhoused, and underserved people of Freeport right on site at the Chicago Avenue Mission.

The Freeport Eats & Beats Festival had another successful year, as Grace Church's signature giant cookies raised over \$2,000; the most yet. It is always a lot of work, but I hope this tradition can continue as Grace benefits both from the fundraising and the exposure from participating in a large community event. This year it was decided to use the funds raised for some things the church needed. A little over half of it went to the purchase of 46 new Prayer Books, 6 Hymnals, and 10 Hymnal Supplements. Books in disrepair have been replaced, and pews that did not have a full complement of worship books have been filled. The rest of the funds await another project or need.

Love Hopes, the grief support group for parents who have lost children, grew in the last year, having nearly outgrown the Guild Room where they meet. Again, it has been a tremendous privilege to walk with them through their grief, and to witness the bonds that have formed between them. They have become a family forged through the unthinkable. I will miss them all dearly, and I hope Grace Church can continue to accommodate them, providing them a much-needed place of healing.

Hope WINS has also blossomed and branched out in 2025, not only extending its services, but forming several community and regional partnerships along the way. If ever there was proof in mustard seed theology, they are it. Linsey McDanel took a huge risk this past school year by taking a year sabbatical from teaching to put her energy into Hope WINS's growth and sustainability. It has not been easy, especially since

significant grant money that was promised is now on hold indefinitely. Despite an uphill battle, they continue to thrive.

Linsey and I recently had a conversation about the future of Hope WINS at Grace Church after I am gone. They would like to stay, and I would like them to stay, but she is very worried they have been a thorn in Grace's side. My vision has always been to form a partnership that goes beyond mere coexistence with a list of "rules" to be followed and instead operates in the true spirit of collaboration – an extension of Grace's Christian witness. I have failed to establish that, not creating a system with good communication, accountability, and mutual support. The result has been that I spend a great deal of time and effort running interference.

My mission, before I go, is to rectify that as best I can, so that perhaps this crucial ministry may continue in its partnership with Grace Church. My goal from the moment I got here was to figure out how to use the "Youth Center" for something. When Hope WINS spilled beyond the architectural threshold of that wing, that is when problems arose. So, between now and my departure, I hope to revive the collaborative vision so they can continue to provide the unique services they provide and the "Youth Center" does not fall dormant once again.

In closing, it has occurred to me that I have used the word "continue" no less than a half dozen times in this report. Perhaps it is a fitting theme, though, as Grace Church prepares to move into its next chapter – *continuation*. There is a lot of momentum here, a lot of fruit on the vine to be harvested, all of which will be very attractive to Grace's next prospective rector. There is also strong and capable lay leadership in place for this time of transition. We often hear the phrase, "The Church is the people, not the building," and in this context it is absolutely true. I thank God, and all of you, from the bottom of my heart, for the privilege of serving in the name of Christ with you, and may God continue to bless Grace Church in its life and ministry to come.

Yours in Christ, Fr. Brian Prall, Rector

Grace's Greens

The local Environmental Study Group, which includes several members of Grace Church, is sponsoring a monthly lecture series entitled "The Cost of Living with Climate Change." Presenters are top-notch state and local experts who will address impacts and opportunities of our changing climate in northwest Illinois. These lectures will be held at the Freeport Public Library beginning at 6:30 pm. They are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Dates, topics and presenters are

Wednesday, February 18. **The Health Impacts of Climate**

Change by Dr. Jack Herrmann, Professor Emeritus from the Center for One Health and School of Public Health at University of Illinois

Wednesday, March 18. **Climate Change Impacts in Illinois:**

From Farms to Forests by Dr. Trent Ford, Illinois State Climatologist

Wednesday, April 8. **Good Climate Policy, Real Savings:**

What Illinois Has Done and What We Can Do Next by Jennifer Walling, Executive Director of the Illinois Environmental Council

Wednesday, May 6. **Climate Risks and Resilience at the Local and State Levels** by Dr. Jessica Rudnick, Climate Resilience Specialist with Illinois Extension and City of Freeport Leadership and staff.

Please join us.

Submitted by Deborah Lischwe and Candace Colby

Bits and Pieces

FACC First Sunday Meal Donation is Sunday, February 1st. This goes to sponsor a meal for our usual slot of the second Thursday of each month.

February 1st 95th Birthday Celebration for Nelda Worthington at coffee hour.

ECW NEWS The women of Grace Church are invited to our First Friday gathering on Friday, February 6th. We'll meet at 11:30 in the undercroft for lunch and fellowship. "Bring your own lunch"

Vestry Meeting Sunday February 15th after the 9:00am Service.

People of Grace Breakfast February 21st, 8:00am at Nine East Coffee Shop.

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.

Treasurer's Report

Below is a comparison of the financial results for 2025 compared to the budget for 2025.

	2025 Results	2025 Budget	Per Cent of Budget
Total Revenue	258,331	224,682	115%
Less air conditioner & deck	(37,930)		
Revised Income	220,401	224,682	98%
Expenses:			
Personnel Costs	145,577	148,458	98%
Building & Grounds	79,740	61,636	129%
Other Expenses	<u>47,949</u>	<u>32,300</u>	<u>148%</u>
Total Expenses	273,266	242,394	113%
Less air conditioner & deck	(37,930)		
Revised Total Expenses	235,336	242,394	97%
Gain (Loss)	(14,935)	(17,712)	

In 2025 the church paid a total of \$37,930 for the new air conditioners in the sanctuary and \$13,000 for the new deck at the rectory. These expenses were paid for by the Endowment Fund and a donation from a parishioner. I have deducted this cost from the revenue and expenses in orders to show a fairer comparison of our income and revenue compared to the budget.

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

February



1st Adam Moderow
8th Thomas Nord, Jr.
9th Jim French
10th Carol Francis
12th Noah Watson
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 17th.

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Miracles
Happen

February Newsletter