



# The Messenger

## March 2026

### *Rector's Report*

For my second to last Sunday as Grace's rector, Lucy and Charlie both served together as acolytes for the first time, and weren't they cute?

Fifteen minutes before the service, however, they were anything but. There were a lot of tears as Lucy said I was "giving away" all her duties because of Charlie (I demoted her to a torch for propriety's sake). She even grumbled in my ear after the procession because Charlie took her seat – sat in "her pew." The Episcopalian is strong in that one.

I tried explaining that he is the same age as she was when she started, and he has every right to be a part of the service. And to be fair, she usurped most of the duties of our established altar servers. The conversation brought up a few other growing pains on a family level: Charlie, now coming into his own, threatens to change "the way we've always done it."

I get it: change is hard. Change is almost as hard as it is inevitable.

As I take my leave from Grace Church, and the parish prepares for the process of calling a new priest, you will all be asked to do a lot of reflection. One of the questions you'll be asked is, what are you doing to prepare for the Church of the future? It is a standard question on the OTM profile a parish puts together before posting the position. A lot of churches use this question to tout technological innovations, like livestream, which is a fair and practical answer.

However, that answer deprives a parish of doing necessary discernment on a deeper level that really addresses the question's subtext: the Church of the future is not the Church of 30 years ago, or even 20 years ago, so what is the parish doing to think outside the box to remain engaged and relevant? How is it going to be Christ's heart and hands *now* and in the next 10, 20, or 30 years? If the Church is waiting on a miracle to turn the clock back a few decades, it is no doubt missing what God is doing right in front of them at this very moment.

Hope WINS was my attempt to answer this question, and I still believe in my heart it could be an integral part of Grace Church's future and ministry; I have preached it until blue in the face. With a large, underutilized building, much of it dormant and turned into storage long before I got here, I decided, with the vestry's blessing, to think outside the box. Energy for ministry post-pandemic was low (a phenomenon not significant to us), so I partnered with a budding group with a critical mission. It asked nothing of the people of Grace except to be tolerant of a few little "imperfections" – furniture occasionally out of place, a little clutter here and there, a visible presence of children, etc.

I have gotten a lot of flak for this over the past two years, but never in a million years did I think some dirty dishes left in the sink, or some food ground into the carpet (nothing a gentle brushing with a spare key and a vacuum can't solve, by the way), or a few stray Legos ever necessitated quitting the mission outright. If anything, it spurred me to ask, how can I help to make it better? I believe in the importance of Hope WINS's mission that much.

At my first annual meeting seven years ago, I had everyone write goals on sticky notes. I grouped them thematically and kept them taped to my office wall, right below my clock, until just last week. One goal was to bring back young families, and the other was to find new streams of revenue. As to the latter, we did Eats and Beats, which I hope continues. I also almost

had another ministry I'm part of rent out a room, like Habitat for Humanity did (and with a similar mission) for \$7,000 a year. I got flak for that too, and after a couple of baseless accusations of theft against Hope WINS, I thought it safer for that group if I didn't pursue it any further. They seemed to have lost interest after I announced my departure anyway.

As to the former goal – bringing back young families – no priest can compel the lost generations of Episcopalians to return to the promised land. They have either moved on, or regular church attendance just isn't their thing. A lot of OTM profiles express this as their number one desire, and not only does that set the next priest up for failure, but it really doesn't offer anything enticing for priests looking for their next call – no ministry where they're like, "Wow, that sounds great. I really want to be a part of that." It's more, "Yes, you and everyone else."

But with an organization like Hope WINS, they are unique in their services provided to kids who struggle, who are neurodivergent, or who come from trauma (read: kids not welcome elsewhere). And they are unique for the services they provide to parents. They have brought more kids and more families through the red doors for which we are known than I could have ever dreamed of, between Mac Camp, the R.I.S.E. family nights, and the parent support group. They may not come for worship or tithe, or they may not fill a burgeoning Sunday school, but they are a major ministry in Freeport the Holy Spirit has put before us, and it is Grace's ministry to either see as an opportunity to support, or to lose.

The other day I joined Mac Camp on a walk around the neighborhood. I was assigned to a girl with a tangential relationship to Grace. She is one of our non-verbal kiddos, and she had a death grip on my arm because she walks with a limp. I was surrounded by a few others with similar disabilities, and another with Down Syndrome. As cars drove by, I could see the warm smiles of the faces of motorists, beaming at our ragtag parade. You know what church they all walked into? Grace Episcopal Church.

You know how many other churches in Freeport welcomed those children in that day? None.

It was in that moment that I realized where I failed. I had been playing defense for so long, walking on egg shells and treating the building like I was trying to hide a party I threw from mom and dad, that I never properly invited the people of Grace into the ministry. It was all reaction upon reaction. The minor blemishes never bothered me because I got to see the moments that made it all worth it, like that walk, on a daily basis. I got to hear all the gratitude from parents. I got to see the circle times led by Linsey. I got to eat lunch with the kids. I got to be involved. Leadership 101 will tell you, you must establish buy-in, and I failed to do that.

The good thing is the wardens are committed to continuing Grace's partnership with Hope WINS, and they have already begun brainstorming ways to show Grace the magical ministry you all are a part of just by being here, and hopefully get you all more involved. And yes, cleanliness and clutter will be addressed for those for whom that is the priority.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve at Grace Church. Thank you for the opportunities and the memories. And now, go forth to love and serve the Lord in all the wonderful ways the Holy Spirit calls you to serve.

Love,  
Fr. Brian

***Easter Flower Donation*** It is time to place our order with the florist for the flowers that decorate our walls and doors for the Easter season. There is an envelope for your donation included in this Messenger. Envelopes will also be available in the narthex. Your donation along with any names or intentions to be remembered at the Easter Service can be placed in the offering plate or mailed to the church office.

## Treasurer's Report

Below is a comparison of the January 2026 financial results compared to January 2025.

	January 2026	January 2025	Difference
<b>Total Revenue</b>	65,679	74,237	(8,558)
Expenses:			
Personnel Costs	20,007	19,594	413
Building & Grounds	3,974	2,919	1,055
Other	1,893	3,086	(1,193)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>25,874</u>	<u>25,599</u>	<u>275</u>
Gain (Loss)	39,805	48,638	(8,833)

The total revenue for 2026 is lower than the revenue for 2025 because of timing of pledge payments. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Duane Price, Treasurer

815-233-0006      daprice68@yahoo.com

### ***Bits and Pieces***

***ECW 1st Friday Luncheon*** - March 6th at 11:30pm. Beverages will be provided. All ladies of Grace Church are welcome to attend.

***Don't forget!*** Daylight Savings Time begins on the second Sunday of March! Move your clocks ahead one hour at 2:00am on March 8th.

***Lenten Soup Suppers*** Wednesdays, March 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th at 5:15pm. Sign up sheet on the bulletin board near the kitchen.

***Vestry Meeting*** Sunday March 15th after the 9:00am service.

***Maundy Thursday*** April 2nd at 6:00pm. Agapé Meal to follow. Sign up sheet for the meal is on the bulletin board outside the kitchen.

### **Warden's Corner...**

On March 1, we say goodbye to Father Brian and the Pralls with a leave-taking service that Reverend Andrea Mysen of the Diocese will lead us through, followed by a potluck luncheon to celebrate his leadership, ministry, and friendship.

With that we will officially enter our period of transition, going through the wilderness together as a church, until we identify and call our next rector. Our expectation is that we will not have an interim priest—that is rarer in the diocese these days—but will have supply priests visit likely twice a month for service with full communion. On the other Sundays, we will have Liturgy of the Word with a short homily, led by one of us. We have already secured a priest for Palm Sunday, Easter Vigil, and Easter, so we will be fully decked out with a priest for Easter festivities.

Meanwhile, we are in the process of putting the Search Committee together. We've met with Rev. Andrea specifically on that. John Gush and Cathy Perkins have graciously agreed to serve as Co-Chairs. Becca Francis will serve as the vestry representative on the committee. We will have a very short application process soon to round out the rest of the likely seven-person committee. There will be information forthcoming about the application process and how to apply if you are interested in serving.

So, though we will be without a full-time priest, the life of the church will continue in the meantime! We will be continuing with the ministries of the church—Hope Wins, FACC, and the grief group we host. As wardens, we will do our best to keep you informed about these ministries. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any thoughts or concerns regarding this transitional time.

Thank you for your patience and prayers!

## March



2nd	Mark Moderow	16th	Rayma Pinney
	Jason Bonsky	17th	Mary Lehnhard
5th	Deborah Lischwe	22nd	Amber Swick
9th	Becky Lafferty	26th	Lucy Prall
10th	Chuck Terpening	29th	Carrie Helm
14th	Frances Crowe	31st	Neil Dreier
	Bob Crawford		

**Deadline** for the April Messenger will be March 20th

## Easter Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 29th

9:00am

Maundy Thursday, April 2nd

6:00pm

Agapé Meal to follow

Good Friday, April 3rd

12:15pm

Easter Vigil, April 4th

8:00pm

Easter Sunday, April 5th

9:00am

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Miracles  
Happen

March Newsletter