

Grace Notes May 2019

Our Mission Statement:
To know Christ & make Christ known
Grace Episcopal Church
106 Lowell St.
Manchester, NH





Illustration by Andrew Freshour

Table of Contents

Rector’s Message	3
From the Rector - Lent 2019	4
News from Southern Convocation	5
Got Hymns? 2019	7
Fellowship Committee Potluck Dinner	8
Reflections and Thoughts	8
Grace Church Book Group	9
Book Review	10
Milestones	11
Parish Photos	12

Rector's Message

German Kent wrote: "Let your life reflect the faith you have in God. Fear nothing and pray about everything. Be strong, trust God's word, and trust the process."

Last month our newsletter editors gladly published a poem/essay I had written on grief. While I know I am not the most gifted writer on the planet, I had high hopes the piece would secure me a full scholarship to a week long preaching course titled "The Bowed Head: Preaching Grief" that will take place this coming summer in Grand Rapids, Michigan at Calvin Theological Seminary. A rejection e-mail arrived a few weeks after completing the application process, saying I had not been selected for the program. Though the letter plainly explained there were too many stellar applicants and not enough slots, I still took the news very personally.

A few days later, another e-mail appeared from our diocese, encouraging all New Hampshire clergy to apply for two remaining slots in a preaching program titled "Deep Calls to Deep". The program selects experienced, Episcopal clergy from across the United States to become "preaching fellows." Those selected, the e-mail explained, would journey to Virginia Theological Seminary two summers in a row to spend a week examining their spiritual lives in order to help them reorder patterns of prayer and preparation for preaching God's Word.

After reading the e-mail over several times, my eyes settled mainly on the phrase "only two slots remain." "Only two slots remain. If that's the case, why bother applying?" I thought. But then the words Winston Churchill preached at his alma mater, Harrow School, in the Fall of 1941 drifted into my head: "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never-in nothing, great or small, large or petty." Those words emptied out the doubt within me long enough to get on line and apply for the program. Thus I am pleased to report that somehow, wow, I was accepted to the program

Jesus held and had a "never give in" attitude – in his ministry, his work, his spiritual life. Christ worked tirelessly and steadily on mentoring his disciples and on making God's ways more understandable to the masses by healing, feeding, and fostering hope. Jesus imaged a dogged determination to stay the course, help others, and believe in God's plan for his life and the world around him. Jesus was a "never

give up", "always all in" leader, teacher, and preacher. Christ took risks every day - crossing cultural lines, noticing those at the margins of society, preaching radical words of love and forgiveness.

The reason our parish continues to survive and thrive is because so many of you project Christ's "never give in," (or as Dory in Finding Nemo puts it "just keep swimming") attitude within our church family. You give generously of your time and treasure. You spend countless hours volunteering within both our parish and the wider community. You send cards of encouragement to those who are ill. You visit fellow congregants you love who are in the hospital or home bound. You host coffee hour. You teach Sunday School and/or serve as facilitators at our Wednesday morning study program. You serve at New Horizons and Laundry Love. You serve in leadership positions in all arenas of parish life. You pray through choral anthems and hymns. You lift high the cross down the aisle and in your daily lives. You serve as encouragers, advocates, healers, teachers, preachers, and agitators in a range of situations. You remind me and countless others, by who and how you are, to never give in.

Thank God for our Creator. Who gives us the gift of a new day, every day, to begin again. To hold ever closer to hope. Thank You Eternal, All Loving, Never Gives In or Gives Up On Us, Father of All who whispers, into the crevices of our dark places, "You are worthy. Be strong. Have faith. Trust the process."

Marjorie +

From the Rector

Lent 2019

*Lent is a time to prepare for Easter.
We're getting ready for new life.
Lent is a time to prepare for Easter.
We're getting ready for new life.
A time to work, and a time to pray.
A time to think of God's love each day.
Lent is a time to prepare for Easter.
We're getting ready for new life.*

When I served as a day school chaplain at my previous call every year I taught how the church calendar parallels the earth's calendar. Just as there are different seasons of the year (winter, spring, summer, fall) that call us to wear different colors ("wear white after Memorial Day") and engage in different activities (skiing in winter, swimming in summer), so also does the church change its colors within worship and invites us to pray in different ways throughout the various liturgical seasons.

This past Lent you might have noticed we varied some elements of our liturgy. We began and ended Lent using Eucharistic Prayer D. We began each service in Lent with a silent procession and no opening hymn. We used vessels made of pottery on our altar as we celebrated Holy Eucharist. We replaced our elegant candles with lighting made from the power of three: simple bowls filled with river rocks, sterno cans, and kosher salt. (Pouring a small amount salt into each can of sterno is what allowed you to see the flames!) Parishioner Andrew Freshour graciously loaned us a three-tiered, beautiful altar bell whose dulcet tones resonated long after each level was struck when the elements were raised. Finally, as we ended Lent and celebrated Palm Sunday, we eliminated the sermon for that day so the focus could be on the two gospels, beautiful music, and setting a more somber tone as we entered into Holy Week.

Inquiring minds want to know. How did these liturgical changes impact you? Please share your thoughts with me, your vestry, and your wardens.

Much love,
Marjorie +

News from Southern Convocation

The monthly meeting of the Southern Convocation of the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire took place on Tuesday, March 26. It was our pleasure to host the meeting, with bountiful Grace Church hospitality. Many thanks to all who contributed enough food to provide a lovely light supper to our guests! Your Rector and all delegates were present.

This month's meeting centered on the work of the Diocesan Recon-

ciliation Commission. Formerly known as the Human Dignity and Outreach Commission, the rebrand hopes to convey the idea that there is mutuality in the work of bringing people together, and that part of the work requires owning our piece of what has gone awry in our common life, and intentionally resolving to move forward in holier, healthier ways as we seek to minister to the most vulnerable members of society. This work extends into multiple domains, including, but in no way limited to racial reconciliation, human trafficking and exploitation, environmental stewardship, mass incarceration, gun violence, and the issue of the death penalty.

The Commission's work centers on the broader question of "What does it mean to be Beloved Community?" From this broad question comes progressively more specific questions regarding how we live into our baptismal vows of "striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of every human being," remembering that while we can't change history, we can be intentional about changing its trajectory with carefully considered choices about how we are the Body of Christ in the world, and how we see others, and indeed all Creation as connected. How do we come together again when there has been a breach in the fabric of our common life? How do we remain mindful of this interconnectedness?

If this work calls to you, please speak to Marjorie, Greg, Melissa or Shelley, and they will be happy to put you in touch with a Commission member who can help you learn more!

A reminder to mark your calendars for Revival: Reimagined on May 4 from 1-9 pm in Windham with The Rev. Tricia Lyons, Missioner for Evangelism and Community Engagement in the Diocese of Washington DC. You can register for free tickets on the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire website (nhepiscopal.org/events/revival) and please see Shelley Kesselman if you need transportation. There will be no meeting in April, so that our clergy and delegates can focus on the work of Holy Week and Easter, so the Convocation will reconvene

in May. Your ongoing prayers for our work are asked and appreciated.

Shelley Kesselman

Got Hymns? 2019

The 2018 “Got Hymns?” opportunity spanning the fifteen Sundays of Summer enjoyed a great success, from all that we heard. On the strength of that, we are offering a repeat for the thirteen Sundays this year, June 16th through September 8th. These are the weeks with one service at 9:00 am. Last year, some were disappointed that they didn’t get a chance to choose; we encourage you to take the opportunity this year!

The following rules will help this year’s effort:

1. A sign-up display will be on the piano in the Great Hall at Coffee Hour for both the 8:00 and 10:30 am services on Sunday, May 19th.
2. If you signed up last year, please give someone else a chance this time around!
3. Please choose your favorite hymn only from the Hymnal 1982 or Wonder, Love and Praise. (We ask this for reasons of copyright law and to eliminate the need to copy hymns from other sources in the Sunday bulletin.)
4. One hymn will be chosen for each service and will be placed on a Sunday where it will harmonize most closely with the readings.
5. As we did last year, an e-mail blast will be sent to the parish in early June with a list of those who chose hymns, their choices and the Sunday service in which each choice will appear.

With hopes that this effort will energize and personalize our summer worship, we are,

Your Liturgical and Music Planning Team
Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro+, Mark Cleveland, Carter Beck,
Ken Grinnell, and Lyn Marino

Fellowship Committee Potluck Dinner

May 23, 2019

Family Favorites from the Past

Celebrate the beginning of warmer weather with a potluck dinner hosted by the Fellowship Committee. This will be the culminating event before the school year ends and we pursue our summer adventures.

For this potluck dinner, we would love for everyone to share their family's favorite recipe. The Fellowship plans to create a collection of our Family's Favorites Recipes so please bring the recipe that goes with your dish. We understand that not everyone can attend due to other commitments. So even if you cannot attend, we would love to include your recipe. You can forward it to the church office at gracechurchmanchesternh@gmail.com. You may also hand it to Nancy Johnson, Teddi McIntosh, or another Fellowship Committee member.

Reflections and Thoughts

Chime in

During Lent, I noticed a couple of things that were different during the Sunday Services. One was the use of flaming bowls instead of candles, and the other was the use of a three-tiered chime that was rung at certain times during the service.

Concerning the flaming bowls, I saw it as a signal that there was something special that I should be aware of. In this case, it was serving as a reminder that we were in Lent. I am not a great fan of change, but sometimes change can be good, especially when it signals something I should pay attention to.

The three-tiered chime I saw as significant on several levels (no pun intended). One is the tradition that goes back centuries where chimes or bells were used to signal to the congregation that the service was at a particular point. An example could be during the preparation of the communion elements. In the days

when congregations sat in huge cathedrals, it was often difficult for many to see what was going on at the front near the altar. When the bread was blessed, the chime could be rung as a signal to the congregation, and the people would then react appropriately.

Another feature of the three-tiered chime is that the order in which the chimes are rung can signal different emotions. If the chimes are rung in order from low to high (bong, bung, bing), our reaction to hearing it can be somewhat up-lifting, like we were receiving a positive message. If the chimes are rung from high to low (bing, bung, bong), it can be calming and encourage us to think quietly.

I thought these changes and signals we got during the Lenten services were very nice. They helped to remind us that we were in a special time, and could direct our thoughts in special ways.

Dick Feren

Grace Church Book Club

The Grace Book Group gathering is the place to be on the third Tuesday of each month. Delicious food (potluck), lively conversations about interesting books - and meeting friends. Please join the group at noon on the third Tuesday of each month in the Grace Church library.

Next meeting is on May 21. We will be discussing 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes And Other Lessons From the Creamery' by Caitlin Doughty.

Summer Scheduled Meetings

June 18: *The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper* by Phaedra Patrick

July 16: *The Rent Collector* by Cameron Wright

August 20: *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* by Susan Cain



Pictured: Rene Van Leuven, Julia DiStefano, Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Marlene Thompson, Jane Van Zandt, Nancy Ann Feren, Emery Freethy, Ken Grinnell, Dick Feren, Linda Chamberlain

Book Review

The Dream of the Earth

By Father Thomas Berry, CP, PhD.

Thomas Berry (1914-2009) was a Catholic priest of the Passionate Order. He took the name Thomas after Saint Thomas Aquinas when he entered the Order. He dedicated his life to exploring an idea of Saint Thomas Aquinas that the universe was a single, divine and celebratory event that was not fixed, but constantly evolving. We should not view the universe as “cosmos,” but “cosmogogenesis.”

For over 20 years, he directed the Riverdale Center of Religious Research along the Hudson River. Author of numerous profoundly significant works on the environment, Berry’s seminal work “The Dream of the Earth” explores the spiritual need for a “deeper meaning between and of the relationship between the human community and the earth process.” Humanity is not separate from the universe, but an integral part of it in urgent need of creating a new relationship with it and ourselves.

Berry was interested in creating language expressing communion with nature based on its inner divinity and sanctity. He speaks not of transcendence, but “inscendence,” an inner spiritual transformation rooted not only in redemption, but creative energy and imagination.

For Berry, humanity can heal its relationship with the earth because we can activate the most profound dimension of the universe itself, its capacity to reflect on and celebrate itself in conscious self-awareness. Like all great theologians concerned our spirituality as expressed in our relationship our home, Father Berry demonstrates that capacity quite eloquently and persuasively in “The Dream of the Earth.”

David A. Ross

Milestones

Happy Birthday to the following May birthdays celebrants!

1	Eric Gagnon	18	Edie Cummings
4	Owen St. Onge		Megan McIver
5	Linn Krikorian	19	Dottie Koch
6	Lyn Marino	20	Yar Leek
	Louis Hudon	23	Fiona Stagnaro
7	Jude Lassonde		Michael Duffy
9	Carter Beck	24	Christopher Messier
10	Tim Lassonde	30	Robert Garneau
14	Dwight Simmons		Quinn Turner
15	Ruth Young	31	Matthew Costley
17	David Roy		

Watch over thy children, O Lord, as their days increase; bless and guide them wherever they may be. Strengthen them when they stand; comfort them when discouraged or sorrowful; raise them up if they fall; and in their hearts may thy peace which passeth understanding abide all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, page 830

If you don't see your birthday listed that means that we do not have it. Please call the office so that your special day can be acknowledged – or if we have it wrong, please let us know that also.

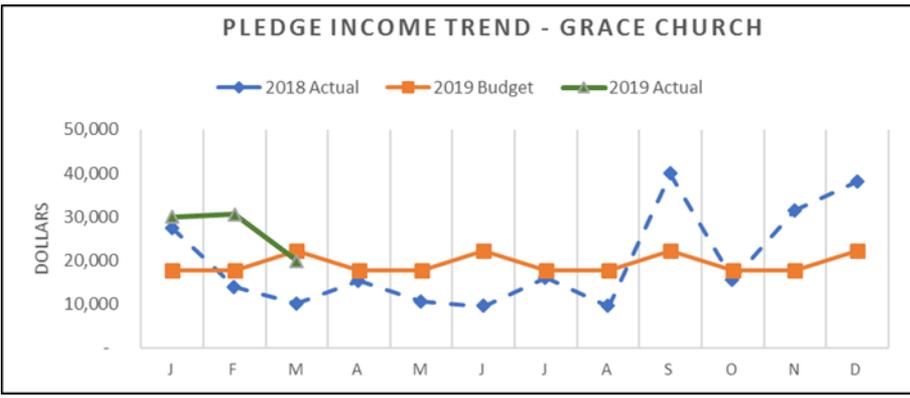
Parish Photos

Laundry Love!

Left to right:
 Back Row: Lisa Mathison, Tom Stevens, Tommy Suckley
 Front Row: Corky the Clown (aka Nancy Frankel, Brian Guimond, Linda Heath, Mary Atwell, Hank Gagnon)



Pictured: Robert Fox, Susan Tonnar
 (Palm Sunday Painting by Robert Fox)



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The Rev. Dr. Marjorie Gerbracht-Stagnaro, Rector
The Reverend Mike Andres, Deacon

Vestry

Linda Heath, Warden
Amy Brumfeld, Warden
Nancy Johnson, Clerk
Gail Austin, Treasurer
David Roy, Assistant Treasurer

Valerie Anderson, Carol Cote, Hank Gagnon, Ken Kjellander,
Christopher Messier, Matthew Serge, Eileen Suckley,
Chris Turner, Meghann White

Staff

Mark Cleveland, Director of Music
Ken Grinnell, Organist
Carter Beck, Organist
Justin & Nicole Otto, Church School Coordinators
Marlene Thompson, Parish Administrator
Lyn Marino, Assistant Parish Administrator
Jill Porter, Bookkeeper
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Susan Senneville, Nursery Care Giver
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Cover Illustration

Andrew Freshour

Next Newsletter Deadline

May 15, 2019